

# Lil' Red Riding Hawk

by JLNicky 01/28/06

[Disclaimer - Spoilers Included Here:](#) In June of 2004 the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council passed an official definition of marriage to be between a man and a woman therefore outlawing gay marriage. Numerous elders were consulted and no one could find concrete examples of same-sex marriage in Cherokee traditions. Get with it people. Women love women in all races! This is my rendition of a fictitious same sex marriage between two loving Cherokee women who were approved by their society as being a productive part of "The People". Please forgive me if I slaughtered anything. If I've offended you with the same sex aspect pffftt get over it. If I've offended you with the whole Cherokee background...I'm sorry. I tried to keep this as true to today's Cherokee Nation as much as possible except of course the same sex marriage thing. ¼ here baby! YES!!!! Enjoy.

## Lil' Red Riding Hawk

Kimi stared at the scene before her, gauging its complexity and strengths with narrowed gray eyes. She unwrapped her boots from the bottom rung of the high backed chair she'd positioned in front of the empty orchestra pit. The cavernous sound of the 1400 seat theater was hollow. She resisted the urge to look behind and above at the hundreds of velvet lined empty chairs. The overwhelming thought of all those people staring at her work urged her to continue. Nearly thirty feet back from the edge of the stage she surveyed the full stage area. Her cowboy boots made a soft click on the hard wooden floor as she stood up to her full height. Her long black hair, loosely wrapped together in a thick braid and tied with a leather thong, moved behind her with a quick toss of her head. Soft whispered conversations taking place in the wings died down as the surrounding crew and stagehands eyed the tall woman with different degrees of amazement. Some considered her to be too gorgeous for mere words. She was the Helen of Troy the soliloquies were written about. Pocahontas was apparent in her heritage with her mocha-colored skin, lighter than true Cherokee blood mixed within her. But, the shaded skin was still darker than the pale skin of her mother's French paternal great grandmother. Her high forehead and

cheekbones were prominent for her face along with her thick lips and the long straight nose.

*"Hi a osda!"* (This is good!) She spoke softly to herself in her native tongue of Cherokee. Her deep, rich voice, gave approval to the stage setup. A brief nod of her head confirmed the positive endorsement. The trees of the forest were realistic down to the scattered pine needles. The path leading through the forest was winding in and out of the trees with portions clearly meant too be displayed for the stage production. The shorter Chinese woman, standing off to the side holding a clipboard, sipping her morning coffee, hid a small, satisfied smile.

Kimi took the next fifteen minutes, focusing on the lighting. Her mind slowly ran through the script and the placement of the actors. She narrowed her eyes and nodded in agreement. She would take a look at the costumes under the light later.

"Good, Mac!" She tossed back over her shoulder as she moved around the floor heading toward the steps leading on stage. She lifted a large graceful hand and waved toward the small window opening residing at the back of the theater, where Mac, the lighting perfectionist was standing with his relay board and mixer full of switches. He waved back, as if she were still watching. The people standing around were getting restless, but they had been going through the routine now for three weeks. They knew their daily critiques were drawing near on their own skills as actors.

A large group of actresses hung out near the food table. A tall, broad shouldered and handsome man, stood in the thick of them, his wolf mask tucked into his belt as he chatted with a few of actresses. His huge, beefy frame was that of the stereotypical weight-lifting brute. Kimi was rather glad that the lead male actor, Doug McKnight, kept sexual encounters out of his professional life. The bevy of young girls hired for the chorus, were each one, obviously hoping they might be the first to have him break his self-imposed rule.

His laughing eyes and vivid expressions showed some of his wide range of skills. The girls ate it up, flirting with him continuously. He smiled and slyly winked at Kimi, as she grinned in his direction. Kimi

nodded as she passed, knowing his secret. He was definitely batting for the other team. Thankful for that tidbit of rumor verified by her casting director, she was immediately taken with him and hired him for the male lead. Of course her reasons were two-fold. His audition was unquestionably superb, and she wanted him to stay away from Anna. Kimi sighed at the huge attraction she felt for the diminutive female lead, Anna Grace. She tried to focus and moved toward the stage.

Yes, friendships were very important to Kimi. She rarely let people from work become involved in her private life. She was surprised at how easily Anna and Doug had entered her heart and how deeply. Kimi pushed her straying thoughts of Anna away and took the stairs leading onstage two at a time, trying to outrun her thoughts.

Hopefully, Anna considered her a friend. She sighed, knowing her less-than-sterling reputation with the rumor mill from the Actors Guild. Regardless of her skill and reputation, other various truths about her personality always ran amuck within the guild. Kimi ignored it all and always stuck with treating others exactly the way they treated her. Unfortunately, many actors expected a slight indulgence when it came to their attitudes. Kimi took each person at face value and gave as good as she got.

As a result, many people looked at her face with respect, only to turn and lean over to others, whispering those little known facts they'd swallowed from the rumor mill.

“She told *him* to shut up! She’s a total *bitch!*” whispered some female voice.

“I heard she slept her way into the field!” answered a young man.

“She sleeps with women!” he continued, jealousy rife in his tone.

She ignored the overt whispers calling her a bitch, cunt and dyke. Obviously the asides in stage whispers were intended to be heard here. She let nothing faze her.

She wasn’t hired to win a popularity contest. She was supposed to

produce the best-damned play off Broadway that was possible. They didn't call her in for her to fail. She was the consummate professional when it came to her work. It was only dealing with people that threw her off-kilter.

Maybe that had something to do with her Cherokee heritage. The *Ahni-sahoni*, the Blue clan of the Cherokee, were well known for their ability to take the impure, chaotic elements in life and break them down to the simplest level. Kimi found herself in the traditions as much as the clan found itself in her heart. She was fascinated with following and learning the intricacies and demanding process of the purification rites in preparation for ceremonies. She loved breaking down the steps and figuring out the spiritual significance. She had always pictured her career as an extension of her birth clan. She could almost feel the ebb and flow of the harmonies between the stage, the lights, the music and the actors, in fact, the culmination of the entire blend.

She didn't feel that the actors were the focal point of the ensemble. The spirit of the audience was the primary heart. Without the studious watcher, the art was without character. She spent very little time indulging spoiled attitudes. Most people found her remarks cutting or derogatory. Unfortunately, she could never understand the response she received, but she called things as she saw them, as things. Her mother raised her to understand the crystal purity of souls and taught her to look for the inner strengths. Many of which she found were tempered by insecurities and impure attitudes or drugs in the people she worked with. She could not understand the former and detested the latter. Kimi took after her mother in many ways, the first of which was seeing the truth in her heart. She stuck to her instincts and beliefs, which usually proved her to be right when it came to her profession and her lifestyle.

She stepped up on the stage and tilted her head slightly. A soft voice was humming and murmuring backstage. Kimi looked over and noted the female lead to this musical production rehearsing her script, alone. A slight smile curled the edge of her lips. She found the vision before her enchanting. The petite woman pacing back and forth spouting lines was irresistible. Her long red hair was striking.

*“Uwoduhi.”* (Beautiful!) Kimi indulged for a moment as she watched the smaller woman concentrating on her lines. With a wrench of her spirit, Kimi purposely turned to look back toward the audience seating and resisted the temptation to continue to stare at the pixie she had found herself enamored with since day one, two months ago.

*Was it only two months ago?* Her first meeting with Anna Grace should have opened her eyes.

“Don’t let me stop you from your quest, stranger. I am here to eat my repast and enjoy the forest. Although, I’m afraid you do seem to look, very hungry. I see the way you are looking at my;” a slight hesitation was made, “lunch.” Green eyes flickered upward coquettishly, a small dimple appeared as Anna Grace auditioned for the lead role in, *Red Riding Hood*, the new Broadway musical. Kimi was struck dumb with the perfection of the woman and her acting skills. Her voice sounded young and pure and her looks were perfect. Brandon Taylor, the casting director, was smiling like he had found gold. Kimi was beginning to believe that he had. *I hope she can sing.* Kimi thought, knowing she was a scant hair away from ignoring that major part of the role, if only she got to look at this beautiful *hu tsi lv ha* (flower) every day. Anna continued with her reading, seemingly unaware of the Indian woman’s piercing gray gaze.

“Perhaps you’d like to join me and dine this afternoon away. I’m on my way to my grandmother’s and I have brought more than enough food for us both. I’d be happy to share.” Anna paused and looked up waiting for the push from the alternate reader. It never came. Kimi cleared her throat and nodded approval. Brandon grinned.

“That was excellent, Ms. Grace. Here is the love song, sung to the forest and its inhabitants. Can you sing bars, 12 through 16 and bring it to the ending?” Brandon took the sheet music from Kimi and hopped onto the piano bench to play the key and notes. Kimi exploited the casting director’s talent, motioning to Anna to follow Brandon. Anna stood beside him at the piano and Brandon shoved the music up to the holder to display the lyrics before them. He concentrated and ran through the melody with her twice, then once more. She nodded and hummed with him as he played the base and treble accompaniment.

“OK. Were ready.” Brandon smiled back, over his shoulder at Kimi. She was glancing through the fairly decent bios sheet Anna provided for the interview. Two of the previous shows were huge sellers off-off-Broadway. They were both being refitted for theaters on Broadway. Anna had been second position, lead and backup for both. Kimi lifted her head and nodded for them to begin. Brandon began a halfway decent rendition of the dramatic ending to the love theme they were going to push on radio for the sales tickets. All of a sudden, Anna sang a low note in a deep timbre. The note rose in volume and pitch as she began to sing the words. Kimi looked down at her hands as they held the paper. Her spirit soared as she listened to the crisp and clean, rich tones.

Beautiful leaf, summers cool shade, winsome sounding.  
My heart sings for your embrace.  
Shade me in your branches and fill my heart abounding.  
Let me enjoy your pine. Be mine. Be mine.

The last note ended and the piano stopped. It was beyond what Kimi had expected. She looked up and found green eyes locked on her in a nervous stare. Kimi raised an eyebrow with surprise. She let a small smile curl her lips as she gave the confirmation Anna so obviously needed. The smaller woman suddenly relaxed and breathed once again.

“It was beautiful, *AwilUsdi* (littlest deer). I thought it was perfect. I am recommending you to be the lead. Brandon, you have gained my respect once again,” Kimi said, looking over at the guy that had promised Kimi the perfect candidate. “Let’s see how long you keep it, eh?” Kimi gave a quick deep chuckle. Brandon winked back at her and grinned sheepishly at his boss, knowing he was perpetually trying new things that sometimes backfired.

Anna stared fascinated at the charismatic woman, telling her she was hired. She only gasped in excited shock when Brandon reached over and poked her in the arm.

“Breathe, Anna. You’ll need to be alive when you get on that stage!”

Anna couldn't stop grinning even as Kimi softly said "Congratulations" in her low voice and strode out of the room.

Kimi paused as she closed the audition room door behind her. She shivered with the breath of a chill breeze caressing her skin. The instant ache of separation from the little one rose into her chest.

*Ageya! (Women)* Kimi thought with a wry smile. *Can't live without them, can't get them out of your soul. And you can't drink them away!* She grimaced at the thought. So her *etsi* (mother) had once told her after helping her to clean up from a two day stint of drinking that did nothing but make her hung over, weak, and sicker than she had originally felt when she walked in and found her girlfriend sleeping with her younger male cousin.

Kimi turned from those dark thoughts and returned to the present and nodded at the entire set. Everything was excellent and she only needed to start the rehearsals.

"Let's get started people. Act three, scene two, in position in two minutes please. Tracy, I'm done for the moment." Her voice rang out to the crowd and to the stage director. Heads lifted, conversation ceased, and movement began to take place. Various actors dressed in costumes of animals began to take positions in the woods, each to their own tree and place.

"Doug, spot 4 and Anna spot 2, please." Tracy's shout sounded. Anna stepped out from behind the backstage area and crossed to her picnic blanket. She was wearing the draped cape of the woman she portrayed, Red Riding Hood. The hood was lying down her back as the brighter red highlights in her hair sprang to life under the stage lighting. Kimi cleared her throat and looked away. Doug replaced his wolf's mask, a thin latex eye and nosepiece that left his dark good looks and strong jaw visible. He walked over to his position at the base of a tree and stood casually.

Everyone was in place and it was time to start the acting for a new day. Starting each day with the same process, Kimi had taken them all through these beginning critical steps to set a pattern everyone could find comfortable. She was only too aware how opening night

would cause chaos and fear. The top six managers for this production were in agreement with the easy practice plan. Although laborious, Kimi's methods had proven, time and time again, the clear ability to find more stage problems from checking so thoroughly. They only had three more weeks before the play was billed. She wanted there to be no mistakes. Her direct approach fit her personality to a tee.

They began the scene and Kimi stepped back to observe. The transitions were smooth, the action and pauses were well timed. It was good. Now she could take a moment to enjoy her daily dose of Anna, the *ulilohi*. (adorable one)

Kimi walked to the food table, grabbing her personal coffee mug. The slogan on its surface made Kimi's lips curl in a half smile. "*Fighting Terrorism Since 1492.*" She filled it with hot water and withdrawing a small sack from her jeans pocket she spilled some of its ground powder contents into the water. A quick stir and she was sipping on her homemade tea. She watched the stage and the scene that was taking place. Tracy Price, the on-stage director, was moving the collective along as she pointed out moments of space and reminded actors of specific inflections to use at specific times. Kimi felt her eyes being drawn to the beautiful creature reclining on a blanket at almost center stage, front.

Anna was gorgeous. Kimi struggled to resist the attraction for the petite temptress. Not that Anna offered any significant recognizable offer in her direction. In fact, they had remained truly professional in that regard. *Unless being caught looking counted.* Kimi shook her head slightly at her inability to control herself. She thought of a moment weeks ago, when she'd walked into the dressing rooms and found Anna standing in her lace and ribbons black lingerie. She froze at the sight. The simple act of speaking left her brain. Stunned, she looked over those perfect curves and beautiful skin, her intense gray-eyed stare revealing nothing, the perfect poker face. The act of Anna slipping the red velvet costume over her head completed her getting fully attired. In those few seconds the stoic producer left. Kimi practically flew to her office, her hands shaking from an intense desire to run her fingers across that soft skin. She was probably the only producer to avoid the dressing room for the duration of the play.

Yes, Kimi felt the attraction to her leading lady strongly. Especially now, it was more so, with two months of daily interaction between them. Every glance of green eyes caused her to breath deeper. In fact, she thought about the attraction more than once. She desired the woman and, unless she went against her clan's beliefs, she would be unable to express it with her. Although an affair was not out of the question, she wasn't so sure she could make it seem casual to her heart. She was also unsure Anna would welcome her attentions. During the two months they'd been working together, Anna had continued to treat Kimi like the consummate professional.

Kimi drew in a deep breath at the strain of maintaining her emotional pretense. Her strong belief in her tribal laws meant that she was unable to offer the non-clan maiden a true place in her heart and life. Ironically, she spent her thirty years of life guarding her spirit from danger, both in and out of relationships, only to find suddenly that the loose fringes were entangled in a web of such longing. She sipped her tea and closed her eyes seeking guidance and calmness.

She was very tired of holding back. She'd spent her life looking among her sister clans to find the right partner, knowing her tribe did not welcome intermingling with those who were not of *the People*. As it was they were only beginning to acknowledge the same sex relationships with their hearts as well as their eyes. Long times before, the relationship was neither acknowledged nor accepted. Progress was as slow and methodical as her Blue Clan craft of drawing the art of the spirits just before a celebration. Many celebrations required the safety and comfort of specific spirits to be acknowledged. One tradition was to use the sacred colors of Red (for power and healing), Blue (for adversity and struggle), Black (for symbolizing the doorway to the spirit world or death) and White (for purity, virtue, and all that is good). These paints were gathered by the Paint Clan and with the help of Blue Clan or Wolf Clan used to design spiritual pictorials onto the skin of the individual, thus helping guide or call to the spirits of choice. She had spent many days working on patterns and images with those that requested multiple drawings. Some intricate spiritual pictorials took hours to transfer, which, for the canvas of skin sitting patiently, felt like a lifetime and more. Her deepest emotions felt like the chance of a lifetime was passing her by. If she weren't able to spend it with the one that was entwined with

her heart, how would she survive? For a moment, sadness overwhelmed her.

She drew a deep breath at the bleakness of her thoughts. Her gray eyes opened to lock with the intense green of her secret attraction. Kimi felt her heart trip to a unique beat of drums. The Indian woman let her forbidden emotions surface, open for invasion. Her gaze held the tenderness for the woman she longed for. The desire she struggled to hold back managed to rise and gleam forth from within her cloudy eyes. Green eyes stared then widened slightly with comprehension. A sudden blink and Anna looked away. Kimi lowered her gaze to her teacup, feeling a stab of pain at the quick rejection. If that reaction was anything to go by, any thoughts of an affair was most definitely not needed. Unable to resist, Kimi looked back once more to gage Anna's full reaction. Her pale skin was slightly flushed and she seemed to be breathing faster than needed. Anna's face was turned to focus on the director's guidance.

Clenching her jaw, she wondered what Anna was thinking. She grimaced, set down her teacup, and, with an abrupt turn, moved to the high back chair where her buckskin jacket was hanging. Grabbing it she rifled through the pockets for the keys to her Silverado. With a quick waving motion to Tracy, Kimi headed out of the theater. The orchestra was practicing less than four miles away and she needed another focus.

Anna watched her leave from the corner of her eye. Once again she was shaken by the power of the charismatic woman, but she absorbed, with inner excitement, what she thought she had just witnessed. Her beautiful producer looked at her with passion in her gaze. Anna clenched her hands around the props of the apple and the wine glass. A spark of excitement rushed through her body and her body tingled, finally knowing their attraction was mutual.

Her thoughts jumped back to that audition day and the chill she remembered that raced across her skin as she'd looked at the producer. She tried to ignore the unmistakable signs of attraction she was feeling and, somehow, still manage to perform well. When Kimi finally left the room, Anna nearly collapsed onto the casting couch from the relief of letting her tensions go. The room suddenly seemed

so much smaller. Anna felt this way every time she was in the exciting presence of the Indian woman.

Anna recalled many times, over the last two months, the pull of attraction toward the taller woman. Knowing Kimi was a professional and this was Anna's first lead role, she avoided complicating their working relationship. Working with the Indian woman was the closest she allowed herself to get, enjoying the pleasure of her presence. Many times when they crossed paths Anna felt the unbelievable longing rise within. One day Doug was practicing his lyrics with Tracy and Brandon and was having difficulty enriching the melodies with the exact touch his Wolf lead should make. Three times he attempted the complex passage. The people around him shook their heads. They wanted an edge of passion, while still maintaining his growl of the wolf.

Anna stood nearby listening and thinking he needed more power. She was about to suggest this very thing when Kimi walked over from the side of the stage and stopped everyone from discussing it. A half grin and a wink to Doug, she eyed the sheet music he held and tilted her head slightly. Anna watched fascinated as she felt the stress of the crew clear from the air with just that one casual touch of relaxation that Kimi brought with her.

"It's really not an issue of what you need to do, Doug. It's how you need to think about it." Kimi smiled at the young man. He frowned and nodded, asking her to continue. Before Anna realized it, Kimi broke out in song. Her deep rich voice flowed out off the stage attracting everyone's attention.

"We walk along and spend the time, her thoughts ahead, my thoughts behind. I need to show my purest face, and stop the beast from a savage embrace. We walk along, side by side, we stride. My beautiful, my delicious, my guide."

Tracy and Brandon grinned and clapped as the producer finished a perfect rendition of the song. Her raw growl of frustration and trembling pitch of longing while she released the smooth tones were clear and styled for the wolf. She looked over at Doug's open-mouthed gaze. Shaking her head at his astounded look, she handed

him back the music.

“Think of a really hot person...that perfect body, that look, that vision, and then think about someone else asking them out on a date. Hmmm? Sing it in your song.” Kimi looked over at Anna standing nearby, her cloudy gray eyes spoke volumes of frustrations. Anna broke the gaze, trying to refrain from showing her desire.

Returning to the present, Anna adjusted her cape, spreading it out across the picnic blanket she reclined on. Her hands trembled slightly. She tried to project her concentration on the stage presentation. She was really tired of fighting her own thoughts and emotions. Seeing Kimi look at her with desire and such tenderness struck her deeply. As she stared out across the empty theater, she wondered if Kimi was so interested, why she didn't make a move to show her. Anna let that thought ruminate for a few minutes before her eyes widened with understanding. Anna realized the avoiding tactic she'd taken when it came to the producer had managed to work in many different ways. Kimi had no idea about her heritage. Anna felt a moment of complete satisfaction run through her. Kimi was going to be in for a huge surprise.

The wheel of fate spun unhindered in Anna's mind as she began to envision Kimi in a starring role. *This one-on-one production is going to happen, if I have to tie her down and cover her entire body with...* Anna cleared her suddenly dry throat and took a sip of the soothing tea they'd put in her wine glass. She needed to create a plan.

The day passed and Kimi found her way back to the theater. A few new scores in her hands and some pleasant thoughts about the satiric lyrics sung to the wolf during the interplay of music had Kimi deep in thought as she rounded the hallway toward her cramped office. She stopped short as she found her doorway blocked by two short figures. Her eyes found two sets of twin verdant green eyes looking back at her as she hesitantly began to move forward again. The younger woman of the two, made Kimi swallow with anticipation at her closeness. Anna was a picture of beauty as she stood all of her 5 feet, three inches in height. To avoid tripping and begging at her feet, Kimi looked over at the other woman with her. A very elderly woman, clearly akin to Anna with those matching green eyes and

short stature, but there the resemblance stopped. Kimi practically stopped mid-stride again, as she recognized the strong tribal traits gracing the older woman's features. The long hair sprinkled with gray and black was liberally braided with feathers of red hawk and turtledove.

"Good evening, Anna. *Osdá svhiyeyi, galvkawetiyu elisi.*" (Good evening, honored grandmother) Taking a chance at the elderly woman's knowledge, Kimi treated her as if she were part of the tribe. Surprisingly the elderly woman nodded her head slightly to acknowledge the title and greeting.

"Kimi, we were just looking for you. This is my grandmother, Adsila Cornsilk, of the Cherokee tribe, *Ahni-tsiskwa*. (The Red Tailed Hawk Clan) She is here visiting from Oklahoma. I wanted her to meet you." Kimi stared at Anna for a full minute in amazement. She had pronounced Cherokee, like a tribal native, not to mention the difficult clan name of her sister clan. The tribe language did not contain r-based sounds and actually sounded like *Cha-la-gee*, when pronounced by the tribe members. Kimi was stunned.

"*Tohidu*, (Good Peace) child. It is good to finally meet the one my granddaughter cannot stop talking about." Anna blushed and reached over to grab her grandmother's arm, urging her not to cause further embarrassment. Kimi slowly let her eyes move from Anna to the older woman. Her gray eyes met sparkling, laughing eyes of green. Licking suddenly dry lips, Kimi knew that the older woman was enjoying playing the cat with her two mice.

Kimi took a deep breath to clear out her sudden confusion.

"`O si`yo, *Ahgawela Selu-utsi.*" (Hello, old woman corn mother) The label Kimi called Adsila was an honorable title, referencing *Selu*, the Corn Mother, a harvest spirit honored during the Green Corn Silk ceremony. Anna's grandmother's last name reminded Kimi of one of seven official ceremonies held in the tribal celebrations today. It was the first thing Kimi thought of to refer to the elderly woman. The title was a high honor conveyed to the close kin of her Anna. If she could not share her life with the woman, she would at least show her highest respect for those she obviously loved. "It is my pleasure to

meet and greet you.”

The older woman shook her head and looked at the taller woman standing before her. The fleeting look Kimi gave Anna with her nervousness was enough to express her entire heart to the sharp-eyed elder. Adsila’s smile widened with inner happiness. Once more, Kimi silently likened it to the cat grinning. She wondered if the older woman would reveal her treasured secret to her granddaughter. *Edoda*, (God) only knew, Kimi was barely able to refrain from showing the sweet woman how much she was attracted to her at this point.

“*Daquadov* (My name is) Adsila, child. Thank you for the honor.” Adsila smiled at the stoic woman.

“Adsila, *Agayvlige*. (Elder woman) It's a pleasure to meet you.” Kimi turned back to Anna and smiled. “I did not know this about you, Anna. *Tsa la gis hiwo ni?*”(Can you speak Cherokee)

Anna gave Kimi a beautiful smile and nodded. “*Gayo tsi woni tsalagi*.” (I speak some Cherokee) The taller woman frowned slightly.

“Are you Cherokee?” she bluntly asked, needing to know the answer more than she needed to breathe. The small, slow nod Anna gave her caused Kimi to draw in a deep breath of shock. The surprise fanned her banked desire into a flame of growing passion.

“What clan are you from?” Kimi asked with a slightly shaken voice. She needed to know Anna was from a clan other than her own. The tribe, although tolerant of same sex relationships, would not allow same clan relationships to form.

Adsila smiled knowingly and spoke before Anna opened her mouth. “My granddaughter is from Red Tailed Hawk Clan, just like her mother and myself. Her father is of the Deer clan. His strong Grecian roots were brought up in her coloring, but she is of *the People*.” Kimi grew excited at the news holding Anna’s gaze as they both listened to the proud boasting of her grandmother. Anna couldn’t tear her gaze away from the gray eyes as she blushed watching a slow smile form on Kimi’s beautiful luscious lips. For the first time Anna let her own

emerald gaze reveal some of her inner desires. She licked her dry lips as she watched Kimi lean toward her. Their mutual attraction was demanding they kiss. Her stomach fluttered with butterflies. A slight cough of her grandmother had them both realizing where they were.

Adsila felt the tension between the two women and hid her smile as she cleared her throat. "I think I need some water. Didn't I see a drinking fountain back down this hallway?" Kimi pointed down the hall all the while looking at Anna with the possessive stare of the wolf to her prey.

"It's right down this hall and to your left, honored grandmother," Kimi described as she stepped toward her own office and pushed open the door. Adsila wandered down the hallway leaving Anna and Kimi standing very close to each other. Kimi took Anna's hand in her own and pulled her into the office. Shutting the door softly, she paused.

Kimi leaned her head against the cool of the wood. Her heated skin enjoyed the soothing temperature. Silence reigned in the room behind her. Anna did not move or speak. Kimi heard only the pounding of her own blood, pulsing through her veins as she slid her hands up the wood surface and pressed away. She released a deep breath and slowly turned around to find Anna standing nearby and looking at her worried.

Kimi let her smile break free. "You are Cherokee!" she exclaimed, liking the statement for the truthful ring and the fact that she was speaking to Anna. Anna relaxed slightly and nodded, a small smile curling her lips. Kimi stepped closer to the smaller woman. Her height towered above Anna, but her relaxed stance showed charm and straightforwardness.

"You do realize that this changes things for me?" Kimi explained softly, as she boldly reached up and tucked a soft strand of auburn hair back from the side of Anna's face. Anna looked up at the gray eyes burning into her with an electric intensity.

A slow nod and a wider smile formed as she reached up and captured the larger hand touching her. Her green eyes darkened as she locked gazes with Kimi.

“I hoped it would, *tsigeyui*. (love) I have been waiting forever.” Her voice was swallowed in a kiss as Kimi leaned down and captured her lips. The space between them disappeared. The press of their bodies together deepened the heat instantly as Kimi pulled them together and opened her mouth begging to be tasted. Anna moaned as her lips parted and her tongue was sucked inside that hot delicious mouth. They shared their unique flavors as they explored each other. Anna let her hands slide up that powerful build to cup pert breasts and graze taut nipples. Kimi groaned at the assault. Her hands slid down the backside of the smaller woman and filled her palms with the flexing backside. Her strong hands cupped, lifted and stroked the fullness she found.

The two women slowly parted, heavy breathing between them. Anna dropped her head to rest against the chest before her. Her hands slid down and around to clasp behind Kimi’s waist. Kimi rested her chin on Anna’s head as they stood together recovering from the most powerful sensations they’d ever experienced.

“I’ve been waiting forever.” Anna voiced her longing, her voice thick with emotion.

Kimi tightened her hug around the small form pressed against her.

“Forever is now here!” she whispered as she kissed the smaller woman’s hair and felt the nod of her response.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Please, *Tanka!*” Anna pleaded with the large man, barring her way from leaving the Red Tailed Hawk Clan teepee; she wanted to go to the main grounds joining all the clans to watch the dancing taking place. Kimi and Anna had arrived the day before and had not seen each other since. Their respective clans almost immediately separated them. Anna had no idea what was going on. She missed her girlfriend. Anna had not left her own clan area per her grandmother’s request and a brief message that was delivered from Kimi via Tanka. Twice she had seen Kimi’s mother and father arrive to speak with her mother and father. Her nerves were frayed as the

confusion grew. Shortly after the second visit where very little was spoken with her in the area, she was quickly shoved inside the huge familial teepee her grandmother had claimed upon arriving. Tanka was sent inside to insure that Anna remained. He was Anna's younger cousin and he refused to be swayed by Anna's pleading. Her grandmother kept stepping inside and making sure she was still in place. Within thirty minutes she was given a beautiful gift of a soft white dyed deerskin dress. Her mother and grandmother asked her to change into it and she was told to wear her best silver jewelry. Tanka left and two female cousins stopped in to design her hair, braiding with ribbons, beads. Neither girl would tell her what was happening.

"Anna, Ehenal!"(Come) Her mother's voice commanded from outside the tent. Tanka stepped back inside and swept the heavy entrance flap upward to help her exit without bending. He grinned at the exaggerated, about-time sigh, Anna expelled as she moved to exit the teepee.

When she stepped outside the tent, she stood totally surprised. The clan leader for the entire Red Tailed Hawk Clan was reclining at her parent's campfire. His honored presence almost out-weighed the presence of the young buck sitting next to him. Her first glance was immediately followed by a second as she found herself gasping out loud. Gray eyes looked back at her from the honored first hand position Kimi held beside the clan leader. Anna struggled not to rush over and demand an explanation. Kimi turned to look at Anna's parents and they nodded in return.

At their approval, Kimi stood up and motioned to the young Blue Clan boy standing off to the side. He walked over and carefully held out the bundle in his arms. Kimi smiled at him and took the package. She turned and gracefully as any warrior hunter, she knelt down at the foot of Anna's father. One hand held the heavy bundle the other reached and uncovered the bundle from its cloth wrapping. Beneath the cloth was a generous portion of deer meat. It was clearly a freshly cut portion of the animal. Anna stepped closer to see and paled at the instant understanding and implications. Her figure tensed and trembled as she stared at the Indian woman who had come to mean the world to her.

To offer meat to the family of one you wish to marry was a right only given to an Indian male. Anna looked at everyone surrounding the fire and realized they all were aware of the implication of Kimi's action and they were also aware she was a woman. They were all ignoring the latter fact. Her family and friends were acting as if she was the male buck she was dressed to resemble.

She was dressed as a warrior male with bare feet and pure white buckskin breeches along with a clinging leather vest, also dyed white. Small tubular bones made up the front of the vest into an armor breastplate. The ceremonial beads and ribbons intermixed into the design spoke of wealth. The thick belt of silk material around her waist spoke of wealth and gifts to come. Looking closer, Anna could see small painted patterns of spirit guides drawn over parts of the exposed skin on Kimi's arms and waist. Even her neckline was painted with a bright red and yellow crest and blue spots. Anna didn't recognize the spirit depiction, but she recognized a lot of time and effort had been taken to complete the work being displayed. That gorgeous body was covered with a complex decoration that enhanced her darker skin.

Her father nodded and her mother reached down to take the offering. Adsila stepped forward from behind her daughter and removed the food to slowly walk over to Anna. Anna felt all eyes turn to look at her. She felt encouraged as her Grandmother held out the meat and told her to go cook it for her intended.

Anna took the offering and moved toward the campfire. The people sitting around the fire turned away from her and let her complete her task. She didn't hesitate to unsheathe the small dagger in the ornamental banding at her calf. She sliced a nice piece of the deer meat and stuck two prongs of wire through it to hold it over the fire. She set the wire endings in the grooves that they normally rested in. Taking a small pinch of the spices sitting near the fire, she sprinkled it on the raw meat. Almost sooner than she realized, the meat was turned and then done. The low conversation, taking place about the tribe's growth and prosperity, slowly came to a halt.

Anna lifted the meat off of the fire and slid it onto the surface of an artistically carved flat plate made from the inner-wood of the maple

tree. As she lifted the plate, she looked toward Kimi. Gray eyes stared at her with an unbendable will shining between them. Anna smiled tremulously and held the plate toward her. Kimi reached over and enclosing the two smaller hands within her own, she helped Anna hold the plate between them.

“*Natlagukwo* (Soon), *love*,” Kimi whispered, as she removed the plate from Anna’s hands. She leaned back from the smaller woman and picking up the meat from her plate, she took a bite. The deed was done. All the participants having witnessed the exchange were ecstatic. Anna’s mother quickly gathered her still stunned daughter and rushed her into the tent. Her grandmother and four, or five of her cousins rushed in and started to chatter about the upcoming wedding.

Anna just stood amazed. She was going to be married. Something that she'd never thought would occur was going to happen tomorrow. She looked over at her Grandmother's tear-filled eyes and realized, she was crying herself. She wiped her eyes and fell into her Grandmother's arms. The high-pitched excited Indian cackle began. The eight women raised their voices to announce the intended wedding.

Outside, the clan leader stood shaking hands with Anna’s father and talking to her mother. The tall woman next to him looked at ease and was concentrating on their conversation. As the cackle began to sound, five warriors rushed out of the nearby tent and encircled the tall woman. They grabbed her arms and legs and threw a sack over her head to control her as they captured her. The minute the sack was in place, she became the wild creature they knew her clan was associated with. A fighting panther struck outward and fought to escape the prison she was almost caught in. Her realistic growl was uncanny causing two of the men to freeze and look at each other. Her kicks and ferocious punches were finding targets as she quickly extracted herself from the attacking warriors.

“*Ayastigis, atsilahu adageyudi!*” (Warriors, I am fighting for love) Then after speaking these required words of the warrior toward her attackers, Kimi raised her voice to shout to everyone her true heart. “She is my soul! There is no other!”

Inside the tent, eight women gave huge dramatic sighs. None sighed so loudly as the intended bride. Anna let the tears continue to fall, even as she smiled so broadly, her cheeks hurt.

As close to tradition as possible Kimi followed the processes of her earlier male ancestors. The next morning, the day of the marriage ceremony, Kimi left her family's Blue Clan tents just before dawn. She made her way to a previously picked location down near one of the smaller flowing tributaries off of Lake Cherokee. Near the water's edge she kindled a fire before the first light of dawn with coals taken from her Clan home fires. She chanted in a low-pitched timbre the call of the spirits to join her. She paused and began to sing to the world of the beautiful morning.

*We n' de ya ho, We n' de ya ho,  
We n' de ya, We n' de ya Ho ho ho ho,  
He ya ho, He ya ho, Ya ya ya*

Her voice strengthened as she greeted the daylight. At the first light of dawn, the spirits were considered strongest. They wandered over the land to strengthen nature and animals and give other spirits guidance or provide favors to the living. Daybreak was most powerful time of the day for the spirit world.

Kimi's father arrived at the first ray of the dawn rising. Her uncle, on her mother's side, quickly followed her father and was soon followed by her grandfather from her mother's side. The three older men requested permission to sit. Soon they were reclining at her fire. Three of her cousins and a close male friend soon joined them. They shared laughter and excitement with her. As they sat around, Kimi began to talk to them about her life and all its adventures. She was soon making formal farewells to her cousins and friend. As per tradition, the groom left his tribe and married into the bride's clan. For any future considerations, Kimi would be a new member of the Red Tailed Hawk Clan. As they stood and left the fire, they all wished her luck. Her father, uncle and grandfather were given personal invitations to join in the marriage ceremony. They accepted to attend. One at a time, they began to give her their best guidance on how to treat a new wife. Kimi listened as she watched the coals burning before her. Just before the coals went out, the three men stood and

gave her their farewells, wishing her luck and gifting her with spirit wishes. She slightly broke tradition when she hugged each one. They hugged her back.

As the last of the coals expired, Kimi took some twigs of ash fetching the still warm contents and stored them in a well-used leather pouch. She was going to take these coals with her to her new marriage grounds. She closed the leather tie and stood to look over the rippling water. Wishing the spirits peace, she turned to head toward her new life.

She made her way to the temporary provided teepee setup in the camp where the marriage ceremony would take place. Her offering of the coals to the priest that waited there was completed. She drew in a deep breath as he evoked the spirit of her Blue Clan and rekindled the new marriage burning fire.

As the fire was lit, women from her clan began to arrive in the early morning light and lay out a feast for anyone wishing to celebrate prior to the actual wedding. It was clear sign of the wealth Kimi came from, when she looked over some of the intricate dishes; quail, clams, fish, corn, deer, and many others adorned the table. The party started in earnest for her family and friends as the morning hours continued. She found she was barely able to eat.

Across the crowded campsites, the bride's family was feasting as well. Some of the dishes from the groom's family had arrived to be shared with the bride's kin and their friends. The bride, of course, remained in her tent preparing for the marriage. Anna was barely able to smell the food without turning pale and nauseous with nerves.

As the noon hour arrived, the two parties ended and the marriage ceremony began. Before the marriage tent, within a blessed sacred circle, both Kimi and Anna were guided to stand. Anna's cousins immediately laid small branches of sacred cedar around the outside of the circle. Cedar was renowned for attracting pure charm and driving away unfriendly spirits; the cedar groves were considered sacred places for medicine men to seek divination.

Kimi let her gray eyes wander over the beautiful woman she was

about to have as her wife. Anna was wearing a traditional white buckskin dress. Wrapped around her waist was a light-blue cloth belt that signified her single status. Her long red hair was parted down the middle and corn pollen was sprinkled into the part. Her small hands trembled as they rested in the folds of her dress. Kimi smiled encouragingly as Anna looked up at her. Slowly Anna relaxed. Both Anna's uncle and Kimi's mother stepped into the circle. Kimi's mother was present to offer her child to the Red Tailed Hawk Clan. Anna's uncle was the male sibling to his niece's mother and afforded the position, by respect. Standing beside Anna, he was accepting responsibility for his sister's child if anything befell the family. Kimi stood up straight, turned to Anna's uncle and offered him the buckskin outfit she wore. She offered the clothing as a sign that she did not need to be provided for and could provide for her intended. Anna's uncle nodded his assent. Kimi bent down and lifted a gift-wrapped outfit she had prepared herself. He took it and smiled. Since he showed approval, Kimi bent down and picked up a smaller offering of deer meat, giving it to Anna. The gift of being able to provide food was obvious. Anna took it and bowed her head. She lifted her head and turned to her uncle, handing it to him. Passing the item in this way, showed her acceptance of his approval. By doing so, she also relayed that her new provider, Kimi, was highly capable to help the clan. Anna quickly bent down and removed an ear of corn from the bowl at her feet. She showed Kimi, that she was not without the capabilities to provide for them herself. Kimi bowed her head and turned to hand the corn to her own father. She let her kin know her new wife was strong and capable. He nodded and smiled. The two older men stepped out of the sacred circle.

The priest stepped into the circle and chanted three times to the witnesses of the clans present, and to the ancestral spirits. "*Nigo disgesdi.*"(That's just the way it is.) The marriage was complete. Kimi turned to her kin and tossed her blue cloth belt to the nearby single warriors. Anna turned and untied the blue cloth belt she'd worn and tossed it to the small group of single women nearby. They both turned toward each other and smiled. Kimi reached over and took her bride's hands in her own. The priest unfolded a white cloth. He spread it out and then wrapped it around both of their shoulders. They were now married.

*"I go hi dv!"* (Forever) Kimi whispered. Anna nodded.

The family started the celebratory dancing as Kimi guided her bride to the marriage tent. Right before they entered, she surprised Anna by reaching down and picking up the smaller woman in her arms. The growing crowd of new kin and friends shouted approval.

Kimi grinned at the small yelp from Anna. Green eyes locked with gray and they both smiled. Kimi leaned down and captured Anna's lips as she ducked and entered the tent to the roar of raised voices of her new family.

The End.