

Chapter 1

It was like hell was unleashed.

The rumbling of the calvary horses hooves crashed into the sandy ground, we felt it. Mother prayed that they were passing by our village, but the sound grew closer and closer. It became evident they were coming for us.

Mother instructed my little brother, Hania and I to hide while she went with my father and older brother outside to figure out what was happening.

Hania, however, became too frightened with the colonizers right outside and began to cry. I looked over at my aunts and cousins who looked at me desperately to hush Hania. I pulled him close and tried shushing him and calming him down, but nothing worked.

Suddenly there was the crack of a gunshot outside. A scream and then the sound of fighting.

Everyone began to scramble. There was no peacemaking today. It was time to flee. Mother and father had taught me should the colonizers turn violent on us, to flee into the canyon, which was not far from our adobe's and that mother would meet us there. I whispered to Hania to quietly follow me out with the other women and children. Keeping mother's and father's words in mind we began to move. I could feel my heart pounding as we made our way through the corridors and waited for a moment to start running.

Slinking our way through the underbrush, Hania and I hid behind rocks and large bushes, hoping none of the calvary soldiers saw or heard us. I spied a large tower of rocks right before heading down to the canyon, a perfect place to hide.

I whispered to Hania to wait momentarily while I looked out to run.

I barely made a few steps forward before I felt a heavy weight slam into me from my left. I shrieked and fell to the ground. The grainy sand scraping my forearm and elbow.

I heard him cursing at me in English and wrestling me to the ground. I heard Hania wail my name behind me. I managed to twist my head around to yell at Hania to get away from here.

"Hania! Go! Get to the canyon!" I heard footsteps all around me while I tried to fight off the soldier. I looked up and saw this scraggly looking man with a heavily grayed beard and a scarred face staring down at me. His yellowed, broken teeth flashed at me as he grinned wildly.

"I got one boys!" He declared, like I was a trophy. I managed to free my leg and kick him in the groin, every man's weak point, and started running, tripping right before I got to the rock tower. But the soldier grabbed me again, he roughly twisted my arms behind my back and whispered all the crude things he would do to me once all of this was over. I felt tears fall down my face, despite trying to hide how terrified I was.

"Catori!" I turned to see Jacy, my childhood friend, and who I would eventually be married to once the negotiations between mine and Jacy's father were completed, stood meters away, armed with his bow and arrows, his trusty dagger tied to his hips. Hania stood behind him.

This was a terrible idea, but I wasn't angry, Hania went to the first person he knew could help.

"Let her go, you bastard." Jacy hissed. The soldier laughed, his hoarse voice making it crack.

"The squaw is mine!" There was no point in negotiating out of this. I analyzed the situation as much as possible... and I knew I couldn't get out of this. The soldier would call for his comrades to backup, and me, Jacy and Hania would all die at their hands.

I looked up at Jacy, hoping my eyes were enough to pleadingly change his mind, but looking up, I saw the determination in his eyes. I shook my head, "Jacy, please don't shoot."

"Ought to listen to her boy." The soldier grinned, pressing his sword against my back.

"You're bluing." Jacy insisted. I shook my head faster.

"Jacy, don't! Please!"

"I'll take my chances." He said, stringing the bow up tighter, ready to let loose, aim for the soldiers head.

"DON'T SHOOT!!!" I cried out. I heard fear in my own voice, causing more tears to fall. In yet another act of malice, the soldier tore out the band holding up my squash flower buns on either side of my head, my long hair falling around my face and down my back.

I struggled against the soldier's iron grip, I could feel his wretched breath that reeked of alcohol on my neck. I watched Jacy make his final, reckless decision.

With a whoosh of air, the arrow was released. The soldier moved me so I was right in the line of fire, and I couldn't move. I was frozen in fear, and I watched as that arrow flew towards me. With my last breaths, I sent a prayer to my gods in the stars, accepting it was my time, and I would soon fall into the warm embrace of my ancestors.

The last thing I felt was the indescribable pain of the arrow striking me. Blood spurted out, and my body fell. I gazed up at the heavens, and my last breath left me.

The air felt cool, and there was a gentle breeze upon coming to. My pounding heart had calmed. It felt like waking up from a good night's rest. And... I didn't feel fear anymore. I could feel the moon and stars looking down upon me even though I could not see.

And... I felt... safe, I think is the right word.

Despite feeling safe, my body hurt all over, particularly in my chest. I wailed in pain, but soon, I could feel the gentle rays of the moon shine down over my body and the pain began to melt away until I felt nothing. I breathed in slowly, carefully. I pushed myself up on a rock, my legs feeling weak as I came to my senses.

I felt different somehow now, like I was in a new body. Everything was still black as night. My eyes then slid open and everything was different. It felt like I was seeing everything differently, but I could not describe it. I looked down at myself, my dark gray dress was now a pristine white one shoulder, a white cloth that I'd only seen colonizers make, I would assume either linen or cotton. And it was embroidered with gold and teal. I had to admit, it was quite lovely.

I wobbled forward, only to trip over my own feet.

"Ahhhh..." I groaned in pain. Coughing a bit, I sat up and rolled over, staring at the sky. What happened?

Nothing to fear my dear, a voice whispered in the wind. I immediately became alert, sitting up and frantically looking around.

Yes, you are. But I have given you a new life.

"Who are you? What's happened to me? What's going on?"

Patience, I know you have questions; but I cannot answer them right now.

"What? Why?" But I received no answer. I shouted into the wind, hoping that voice, or whoever, would hear me, and answer my questions. I was so confused as to what was going on... I didn't know where to go, what to do. I looked around at my surroundings and saw the endless expanse of sand ahead. To my far left, I saw the canyon... A canyon that had a calling to me, and so, I listened to it.

I stopped at the edge, gazing down into the crevasses and I felt my heart leap. No, I wouldn't jump, I didn't think I could fly...

I wandered around the desert aimlessly for some time, it was different considering I couldn't starve anymore now that I was merely a spirit. But, why wasn't I with the stars? Why wasn't I in the spirit world? Is this was purgatory was? Is this what it was like? A spirit wandering aimlessly everywhere without a purpose? Forever? If so... It wasn't as terrible as I'd heard the colonizers describe it as. The colonizers were so "god-fearing". Ridiculous.

The hours turned into days, but before the week ended, I met the living embodiment of wind.

"Hello!" I looked up. A pale face with lavender eyes so light, they were nearly white, and stark blonde hair gazed at me from above. Her hair was cut to her shoulders, and she had massive white wings like an eagle's. Her attire was a light blue top that exposed her shoulders and a loose, knee-length darker blue skirt with white and purple embroidery. She smiled at me warmly, holding out an arm to me, to shake my hand.

"Oh... H-hello." I responded quietly, hesitantly holding out my hand for her. She observed me, tilting her head with a small smile on her face.

"You're new, aren't you?"

"Uh- what?" She laughed.

"Ah, excuse me. Where are my manners? I'm Akilina, Guardian of Vind." I gave her a puzzled look. Her accent was very heavy and a bit difficult to understand.

"Guardian of what?"

"Vind!" She paused when she realized I couldn't understand her, "I'm the Guardian of huukyangw."

"You can speak Hopi?" I asked her, suddenly excited.

"A few words, yes. Not many, though. Are you a Native?" I nod.

"Yes, I am Hopi. Where are you from? I don't recognize your accent." She finally landed and her wings vanished like they were never there. She chuckled so ly.

"I am from Russia."

"Russia? That really big place?" She chuckled again, nodding.

"There are many big places in this world. But yes, it is the biggest country in the world. But most of it is empty space. Most people live in the capital, Moscow."

"I've heard of it..." I muttered. She placed a hand on my shoulder.

"You seem confused. Can I help?" I shrugged.

"I am lost... I have been, reborn, I think. I don't know where to go or what to do. I think I'm looking for something or someone, but I don't know what it is or where it could be..." Akilina paused to think.

"Well, you are a new spirit, it can be very stressful and chaotic. Come with me. I think I know how to help."

"Where are we going?"

"To visit a couple of friends." She outstretched her hand, and, knowing I could trust her, I took it.

"I cannot fly..." I mumbled. She only smiled and picked me up, carrying me on her back, and she took off into the sky, and so, my journey began.