

# BENEATH THE SHINING MOUNTAINS

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

Beneath the Shining Mountains is set in the region now known as Montana and Wyoming in the United States of America; the date, the late 1830s. For the people, the Apsaroke, whose story this novel conveys, the place is Apsaroke lands; the time, the good years between the coming of the horse and the arrival of land-hungry settlers. Game was plentiful; the creeks ran clear. A man could prove his worth by his military exploits – and a woman, if she wanted, could snare herself a husband.

## CHAPTER ONE

‘... but other women my age have a lover.’

‘No man of standing will bring horses to the lodge of a woman who’s had lovers. You know this. So do they.’

Moon Hawk stopped scraping the clinging fat from the pegged buffalo hide and sat back on the heels of her moccasins. She eyed her mother irritably. ‘At least they are happy. At least they aren’t ridiculed for still being a maiden.’

Little Face did not falter in the rhythm of her work, nor did she raise her eyes from the skin. ‘Who’s teasing you? Other young women? They’re jealous. They know what they’ve let slip through their hands. Is it the young men who tease you? They’re showing interest. They see in you the makings of a wife, a woman for whom they would bring horses to the lodge of your father.’

Moon Hawk slapped down her elk-horn scraper, losing grip of her rising annoyance. ‘Tease me? I would need a love-charm for them even to notice me!’

Sighing, her mother raised her eyes from her work. ‘You exaggerate beyond belief. If you stopped scowling, your true beauty would be seen by all. Your nose is straight, your eyes bright. Your skin is soft, and unmarked by the spotting sickness which killed many during your childhood.’

‘I’m small.’

Little Face straightened her bent shoulders and raised her chin. ‘My lack of height did not deter your father.’

Moon Hawk was about to point out the dissimilarity of their situations but drew back. Bear On The Flat had never taken horses to her mother’s lodge. She was not an Apsaroke, but born of their enemies, the Piegan. He’d captured her on a raid and carried her back in triumph as his personal property.

Because her mother rarely spoke of her life before being brought to the Apsaroke village, Moon Hawk didn’t mention it, either. On the few occasions that she had, Little Face had merely smiled and said, ‘I was happy there. I am happy here.’ At times, it was difficult to know what she truly meant.

Moon Hawk dropped her gaze, embarrassed that she should even think of parading her mother's past before her, but, as always, Little Face seemed naturally attuned to her daughter's thoughts.

'It's true,' she admitted, 'your father didn't bring horses to my lodge.' A wry smile crossed her face. 'My father and brothers would have scalped him on the spot if he had! But that doesn't mean that he thinks any less of me. Bear On The Flat has had me as his wife for nineteen winters, come the snows.' She threw her hands up in the air in a show of mock amazement. 'It's almost unknown for an Apsaroke to have a wife for so long. His joking relatives taunt him about it, I know, but he just smiles in return. I've borne him five children, two healthy sons before you, and none of you has lacked for love, or anything a mother can give.'

She paused a moment, a proud and wistful look filling her eyes. 'Your father is of the Fox society. On eight occasions has he abducted a former lover during the wife-stealing ritual — eight occasions — but how many Lumpwood men have stood singing songs outside our lodge wanting me to go with them? None! Not a single one. I've been faithful to Bear On The Flat. I've never made his heart sad. That's why I'm still his wife. That's why he will never divorce me. If, when the time comes, you can say the same about your husband . . .' She left the rest unsaid, but her meaning was plain enough.

Moon Hawk worked on, trying to be convinced, but it was difficult.

'He's not the only eligible young man in this village,' Little Face reminded her.

'No,' Moon Hawk admitted — but Winter Man was the one she wanted.

Tall, slim, handsome in features and in dress, Winter Man had the courage of the cougar and the cunning of the coyote. He, too, was a member of the esteemed Fox warrior society. He'd gained a number of battle honours, counting a minor coup on two occasions, once by being the third to touch a living enemy, and the other by being the second to touch a newly-killed enemy without enraging the dead man's ghost; but his most important coup had been gained the previous year in the taking of a gun from a Lakota warrior during a skirmish outside the village. In recognition of this act he was eligible to wear a shirt with hair-lock pendants ranged along the sleeves.

How he had worn that shirt! As she recalled, the only time he'd taken it from his back had been during the communal ablutions performed each morning at the creek. Their families shared the same stretch of water. She'd often glanced at him, willing him to look her way. But he never had.

His initial flush of triumph had passed some time ago, and he didn't flaunt the shirt now, except on festive occasions when all the men wore their war honours and proudly told of the actions in which each had been gained. Moon Hawk had dreamed about that shirt. If she'd been a female relative — or Winter Man's lover — she would have donated a lock of her own hair to hang from its sleeves, and walked with him when he'd worn it to bask in his glory. Because he was a man with war honours, he carried the title of Good Young Man, and was openly praised by his elders at feasts and celebrations. With more coups to his credit, especially a grand coup, he'd become a Good Man and lead his own raids against enemies of the people.

There were other things she liked about him, subtle things. He was generous. That was always well regarded in a man. He owned many fine mounts, and regularly gave one away as a gift to someone less fortunate than himself. He was well skilled, too, in racing horses, wrestling and the intricate dart-through-the-hoop game. With his handsome face and keen sense of dress, he was the answer to a maiden's prayer. The problem, Moon Hawk acknowledged, was that he knew it and took good advantage of his fortune. He was hardly ever to be seen without some youthful beauty in his arms. What man needed a wife when he had so many lovers?

She attacked the buffalo-skin with such purpose that her mother threw up her hands in dismay.

‘Enough! Enough! I’ll not have this robe damaged for the wishing of a man.’

Moon Hawk hung her head, her eyes misting in spite of her efforts to control her despondency. ‘I’m sorry, Mother. I’m unworthy.’

Little Face gazed at her daughter for several moments before returning her attention to the large hide. She stroked its damp surface with her fingertips, gripping and re-gripping the fleshing tool in her other hand, but she didn’t attempt to work the skin.

‘I— I’ve not mentioned this,’ she began, ‘but two days ago I had an enquiry about you from the mother of Skins The Wolf.’

Moon Hawk felt the small hairs prickle on the nape of her neck. ‘Skins The Wolf?’

‘Yes. He’s a member of the Lumpwood warrior society, I believe. He has coups to his name, is young, of a good family . . .’

Moon Hawk didn’t need to be told of his background. She knew of Skins The Wolf. Often in the company of Winter Man, he’d looked at her on more than one occasion. In her mind she could see him now, his steady charcoal eyes burning into her.

‘I don’t like him,’ she said quickly. ‘I don’t like his smile.’

It was a childish reply, she realised, one that would be cast aside with a derisive flourish of her mother’s hand, but how could she put into words what was only a feeling? It was true that Skins The Wolf was of a good family. He was brave. He had gained honours and the respect of older men. He had lovers, of course, as was expected of a man who had gained a war honour, but he was discreet. He didn’t parade them as Winter Man did his. There was no specific reason for her to feel the way she did about Skins The Wolf, but a look from him made her flesh crawl. She didn’t like him.

Instead of admonishing her daughter, Little Face seemed relieved. ‘Hearing you say that takes a great weight from my shoulders, for I took it upon my own judgement to refuse the advance.’

Moon Hawk was astonished. ‘You didn’t discuss it with Bear On The Flat?’

Little Face shook her head. ‘Your father already knows, I can sense it, but he’s said nothing. He’ll be waiting for me to broach the subject.’

‘Won’t he be angry with you?’

‘He has every reason. I should have consulted him.’

Moon Hawk let the scraper slip from her fingers and stretched out her hand to comfort her mother. ‘Why didn’t you talk to him first?’

‘I didn’t wish you to go to Skins The Wolf.’

Moon Hawk shrugged, unable to perceive her mother’s concern. ‘But I don’t wish to go to Skins The Wolf. Father would never force me to marry someone I didn’t want.’

‘You don’t understand, Moon Hawk. Your father and the father of Skins The Wolf have always been close. Years ago, when Bear On The Flat was unhorsed during a fight, Fire Club saved his life by riding back and taking him up behind his saddle. Your father has always felt that debt. I was afraid that he might insist on the marriage.’ She paused, as if a great pressure of air was trapped in her chest, cramping her words. ‘I couldn’t take that chance.’

Moon Hawk held her peace. There was more to this than one man risking his life for a friend. She watched her mother bite her lip. She wouldn’t raise her eyes.

‘When your father took me from my people, I wasn’t alone. I was with a clan-sister. She was taken by Fire Club. He didn’t treat her well, and the first winter we were here she walked out into a blizzard. She preferred death to being with him. Skins The Wolf was very small then, but he’s grown, and he has the look of his father.’ Her head fell forward, her voice fading to a whisper. ‘I didn’t want you to go to him.’

Moon Hawk gazed at her mother, not knowing what to say. Little Face had never spoken

of this clan-sister before. She wasn't sure what she could do. And then she knew.

'Even if Bear On The Flat insists, I will not go to Skins The Wolf,' she declared. She straightened her back, more determined than ever. 'It's Winter Man that I want for my husband, and I'll have no other.'

Little Face brushed a tear from her cheek and forced herself to raise her head and smile. 'If that's your final decision, we must see that it is brought about, and as soon as possible, I think.'

Thankful to be able to draw her mother from her haunting memories, Moon Hawk openly guffawed. 'First Maker has touched you with the sun! Winter Man doesn't know I exist. If you go making advances to his family on my behalf, he'll laugh so loudly that we'll die of shame.'

Little Face inclined her head in that manner she used when she knew she was about to win a large cache at dice. 'There are many elk for the hunter to take, yet he invariably concentrates on the one that defies him.'

'Defies him? Winter Man doesn't even see me!'

'Then we must make him see you.'

Moon Hawk felt a tingling expectation begin to climb her spine. 'How?' she whispered. 'There are ways.'



The song was loud and bawdy and sung with gusto. It finished with a high-pitched cry, such as a warrior might exclaim on the taking of a coup, and the singers playfully laid about each other's horses with the long thonging of their riding quirts in an effort to make the animals unseat their riders. Only Frost looked unsteady on his mount, and his companions laughed and jeered at him, making him blush and bluster and blame an unseen prairie dog hole beneath the hooves of his paint.

'What you need,' Skins The Wolf sneered, 'is a woman to teach you how to ride!'

'What he needs,' countered Hillside, 'is a woman to make a man of him!'

Frost blushed deeper still, almost the colour of the vermilion he wore about his eyes, but he wouldn't rise to that particular bait. His friends jeered him once again, all except the tallest. Winter Man slipped a long-fingered hand behind his neck and drew the length of his unbound, blue-black hair behind his broad shoulders. Finely dressed with the grease of a young fawn and smelling of sweetgrass, it surged down his bronzed back as if water from a breached beaver dam. The tips of each thick lock danced about his waist, reaching for the hip-hugging belt which kept his breechclout and leggings in place. Other men glued hair into their own to gain such a length, but Winter Man needed no red-painted balls of pitch in his hair; it was all his own.

He pursed his lips as his gaze swept over his companions. His raven eyes grew wide and bright as he grinned in mischief.

'Tokens!' he cried. 'Tokens!'

Displaying lovers' tokens was a favourite pastime for young men away from the village, and they quickly drew their horses to a halt and arranged themselves in a tight circle. Winter Man was the first to pull his from his belt, a tasselled otter-skin bag no bigger than his palm, and press it to his heart.

'Given to me in love, I swear, from the beautiful hand of Kills By The Water.'

His statement was met by wide-eyed astonishment. It was Hillside who broke the silence.

'Kills By The— She is Butterfly's wife!'

Winter Man looked at him, his face a mask of innocence. 'I did not seek her. I seek no man's wife, you know that.'

Walking Backwards nodded wistfully, 'Oh, yes, we know you don't seek them, but if any smile at you . . .' He raised a warning finger. 'Word will get back to Butterfly, Winter Man, it always does, and he's not noted for his forgiving ways.'

'You're merely jealous!' Winter Man lifted himself on his pad saddle to over-ride their noisy derision. 'Besides, who'll tell him? You four are the only ones who know.' He gazed at each of them in turn and watched their smiles fade. The displaying of lovers' tokens while on the hunt was, by custom, cloaked in secrecy. Winter Man was almost insinuating that one of them might disclose the knowledge, that there was among them a man lacking in a warrior's honour.

The humour was wrenched away from the moment, and for a while no one said anything; then Hillside forced a chuckle from his lips to alleviate the strain, and hooked up one of the three bone and bead necklaces he wore about his neck.

'Given to me in love,' he avowed, 'from the hand of my beautiful Jay.'

The others groaned, and shook their heads, and smiled good-naturedly. 'If we hear any more about your wife . . .'

Hillside deflected their disparaging remarks with a flick of his wrist. 'One day,' he retorted, 'one day you will all find yourselves wives, and then you'll know what you've been missing.'

With a flourish, Skins The Wolf lifted a small beaded pouch into the air. 'Given to me with love, I swear, by Mint, so that I might forever smell of the herb which gave her its name.'

Winter Man was fast with a cutting response. 'Because you stink from never washing, you mean!' The others laughed, but Skins The Wolf did not bear the joke well and scowled at him.

Walking Backwards began to wail, making a great point of brushing aside feigned tears. 'No one loves me!'

There were great hoots of laughter. Hillside pushed him playfully in the shoulder with his quirt. 'So, Cherry has had her eyes cleared at last! I salute her! What she ever saw in your ugly face I can't imagine!'

'Give Winter Man a horse,' one of them interjected. 'Perhaps he can find a blind cousin for you!'

The banter slowly abated. It was Frost's turn to produce a token. The youngest of the group, he didn't lack valour in the face of his people's numerous enemies, and had gained himself a minor coup, but to the knowledge of his friends he'd never had the courage to tempt a woman to be his lover.

Frost altered his weight in his saddle, leaning over the freshly killed antelope slung across its pommel to draw out the moment. His head was bowed slightly, and from beneath hooded eyebrows he anxiously surveyed his companions. Without warning, his hand darted into the food-bag hanging alongside his mount's neck. As if he'd just taken a scalp, he punched the air triumphantly. Caught in his fingers was the most beautiful clipped-feather hair ornament, decorated with red and yellow dyed porcupine quills and strings of blue and white trade beads.

'A token!' he cried. 'From Pine Fire, my lover!'

There was a resounding cheer, and with help from Hillside the ornament was tied into the back of his hair to show it off to its full effect. Brandishing their quirts as if to strike a grand coup on some imagined enemy, the group kicked their horses into a gallop and charged abreast across the rolling grasslands.

Winter Man was the first to draw his mount back to a walk, Hillside following soon after. They rode together a while, calling both encouragement and derision to the racers until they could no longer be heard.

‘You knew about Pine Fire,’ Hillside mused.

Winter Man nodded, an indulgent smile pulling at his lips. ‘She’s very friendly with my youngest sister — and my youngest sister talks.’ He opened his arms in an expansive gesture. ‘Frost is her first, too. It’s a good time for them both. I’m happy for them.’

Hillside almost choked. ‘You — who have had so many women to warm your nights — sit astride that horse with eyes as bright as a maiden’s on her first courting!’

‘Ah! You’re an old married man. You’ve lost your sense of excitement, your sense of challenge!’

The laughter faded from Hillside’s sunburnt features and he gazed at his friend through narrowing eyes. ‘And what was that challenge you laid at our feet? You spoke as if we’d the honour of Piegan dogs. Your joke was not appreciated, Winter Man.’

‘It was no joke. Remember Squirrel?’

Hillside remembered Squirrel. Like so many women, she had been a former lover of Winter Man.

‘She came to me only the once, during the berry-picking. She was unhappy. Marks The Trail and she were not sitting well together. She wanted a little understanding.’ He shrugged. ‘She wasn’t looking for my embraces, neither was I for hers: it simply happened.’ His voice took on a harder edge. ‘But someone told Marks The Trail — told him that I’d been her constant lover since the day of their marriage. He took her out of the village where her family couldn’t see and interfere, and he beat her until she could hardly stand!’ His anger whistled free between clenched teeth. ‘I heard of it later from one of her clan-sisters who thought I’d been boasting of my seduction. I went to Marks The Trail and gave him the truth.’

‘Did he believe you?’

‘Not until I offered him one of my best horses and swore on his pipe.’

Hillside shook his head. ‘I can’t say I’m surprised. You do have a reputation with women. I wondered why Marks The Trail had left the village to join another band. Is Squirrel still with him?’

‘She considered her punishment deserved and wouldn’t return to her father’s lodge.’

‘It’s left you with a sick taste, I can see.’

Winter Man turned an uncompromising glare on him. ‘It was done for spite, pure and simple.’

‘But to whom? Not necessarily you, my friend. It could have been done to spite Marks The Trail, even Squirrel herself. You can’t be sure.’

Winter Man didn’t reply. He gazed out across the grasslands towards the dark band of trees which marked the foothills of the Shining Mountains.

‘What I can’t understand,’ Hillside continued, ‘is that this pain still rages in your heart, yet you’ve just placed Kills By The Water in the same position.’

Winter Man snorted. ‘Kills By The Water is a different woman altogether. She makes free with every man she can lay her hands on! You’d think she was gathering a conquest bundle to outmatch an Hidatsa’s.’

‘But it might happen. Butterfly is a jealous man.’

‘And if it does, then I’ll know that I’m the one who is the target for someone’s spite.’ His eyes searched out their distant companions. ‘And I’ll have narrowed the possibilities considerably.’

‘That doesn’t say much for me,’ Hillside murmured.

Winter Man turned and slapped him on the shoulder.

‘Not you! You’re as much my brother as if the same woman had suckled us.’ He smiled broadly, but the smile didn’t reach his eyes, and when Hillside’s expression failed to change, his smile slipped away completely.

‘It’s difficult,’ he said. ‘We’re all strong-hearted Apsaroke living our lives to the full,

knowing that we'll probably die young, hoping that we'll die courageously. Our warriors are outnumbered many times, by Lakota, by Piegan, Shoshone . . . The list is longer than the fingers of my hands. I'd give my life for any one of our people, Hillside, and I always believed that others felt the same. To think that one might not sear the shadow of my soul.'

'Grave words. They'd well suit the respected leader of a band. If anyone else had heard them coming from your lips they'd have thought themselves touched by First Maker!'

Winter Man tossed back his long hair, and laughed. 'I should have known! I speak to you of my feelings and all you can do is make jokes.'

'I don't joke. In a few more years, when you've tried every woman there is to try, and finally got yourself a wife—'

'A wife! You sound like a blackbird that can sing only one song! What do I want with a wife?'

Hillside lifted his head and gave him a look powerful enough to wither the grass. 'The question is,' he retorted, 'what woman would possibly want you as a husband!'



Moon Hawk prodded the ground with her digging-stick, desperate to keep her mind on her chore. As a woman, collecting roots to supplement her family's meat-dependent diet was one of the many tasks she undertook, but because it was always dangerous to be so far from the village, women went on such forays as a group, for company as well as safety.

The day had been long, and hot for so late in the autumn. The women with Moon Hawk talked and sang as they worked, stopping every once in a while to pick herbs, play dice or simply to laze beneath the sun. Outriders had accompanied them to keep open a wary eye, but root-digging was women's work and the young men stayed at a distance, talking and laughing and singing among themselves. Such an expedition was not unusual and raised no speculations. Only Moon Hawk, Little Face and a few selected clan-grandmothers knew it had been organised with precision simply to intercept Winter Man on his return from a hunting trip.

Moon Hawk felt the tight clasp of her mother's hand on her shoulder.

'The outriders have given the signal for approaching men,' she said briskly. 'Winter Man is on his way.'

'It might be Lakota warriors,' Moon Hawk offered, hard put, in her moment of nervousness, to decide which would be the worse.

'Nonsense! Even a child knows the difference between a hunting party and enemy raiders.' She pulled the red-painted yoke of her daughter's dress further on to her shoulders, making its bright shell ornamentation tinkle and dance against the soft elk-skin. A quick eye checked the blue and white beaded belt about her daughter's slim waist, and the subtly decorated leggings and moccasins peeping beneath her calf-length dress. She brushed a suggestion of dust from Moon Hawk's cheek.

'I should have painted your eyes a darker vermilion, I think, and added a little more to your cheeks.' She stood back and looked at her daughter's face. 'Perhaps not. After all, this is supposed to be a chance meeting, not a feast. Is it clear what you have to do?'

Moon Hawk nodded. Her teeth were chattering so much she dared not risk saying a word.

'And smile! Be confident! A faint heart does not win a man his coups and neither does it win a woman her man.'

A grandmother called a warning, drawing Little Face's attention, and Moon Hawk slipped away to her appointed place.

The grandmothers were instigating a little horse-play between the younger women and the outriders, who needed short encouragement to come down from their hill once they knew

what was happening. No occasion for flirting was overlooked by men of their youth. The young people ranged themselves in two lines facing one another, the women with their roots piled at their feet for missiles. The ribald banter began from the unmarried women, growing to almost a raucous harangue before the bravest young man attempted to cross the ground to take a kiss from the woman of his choice. He was met by a hail of small nobby turnips, as were the rest, and then, amid thunderous shrieks and laughter, it was every man for himself. Into the midst of this rode the hunters.

Moon Hawk recognised Winter Man at once and her heart turned to jelly. What if he were angry? What if he called her a stupid little girl? What if he rode away without saying anything at all?

She let her eyes run over those who rode with him. There was Hillside, Frost, Skins The Wolf and Walking Backwards. Between them they'd had a good hunt, for a butchered elk and two big-horn sheep were lashed to a travois being dragged by a loose horse, and each rider had a small antelope slung over his mount's neck.

The hunters drew their horses to a standstill and looked on at the antics of their more youthful cousins with a mixture of amusement and disdain. Men who had counted coup did not begrime their prestige by entering into such games, but they all remembered when they had.

Moon Hawk had eyes only for Winter Man. He flanked the group, a mercy she gave thanks to First Maker for. She'd no idea what she would have done if he'd been surrounded by his friends. Despite being away from the village for more than four days, his raven-black hair was as immaculately dressed as ever she had seen it, its length almost touching his horse's rump, the quiff above his brow erect and as whitened as a swan's tail. His leggings were stained with mud and water to the knee, speaking much of his industry on the hunt. No shirt stopped the sun from shining on this bronzed skin, and only a looped necklace of tiny bone discs adorned his well-developed chest. Moon Hawk's eyes traced the slight shadow of each rib beneath his muscled arm, and followed the expanse of firm flesh down past his breechclout belt to his powerful thigh. Just looking at him brought a thrill of expectation.

Putting such thoughts from her mind, she drew a determined breath. If she didn't act now... Pulling back her arm she threw her chosen missile with accuracy. A small, shrivelled turnip caught Winter Man full on the base of the neck. Such a well-balanced rider needed more to unhorse him, but the blow made him lurch to such an extent that his mount shied. Regaining control, he swung round on his attacker, astonishment sharpening his high cheekbones and widening his eyes.

'Did you throw that?'

Moon Hawk swallowed her fear and lifted her chin. 'I didn't mean to hit you,' she said. 'My throw was wild.'

'Wild? No woman's throw can be that wild!'

Moon Hawk flashed her eyes at him to give her words more vehemence. 'I slipped,' she said, and pointed behind her to some imaginary obstacle in the grass. 'Do you think I would waste a hit on you?'

She glanced across to the young people disporting themselves in the sunshine. As she knew he would, Winter Man followed her gaze. She looked back at him in time to see his face registering utter disbelief that any young woman would prefer someone of no account to him.

'I am Winter Man!' he bellowed indignantly. 'I am a Good Young Man.'

Moon Hawk gave a casual shrug of her shoulders. 'I know that.'

Her reply seemed to cut him to the quick. She took a step towards her friends.

'Ha!' Winter Man spat after her. 'Your lover seems to have deserted you. No boy waits for you that I can see.'

Moon Hawk's heart sang. He'd drawn on the bait as her mother had said he would. She swallowed her smile of excitement and turned back to him with a look of disdain.

'Lover? I have no lover! I am chaste. There's not a man alive who can entice me.'

Before he could respond, she spun on her heel and strode off into the throng of kissing youngsters.

The temptation to turn and see if he was still watching her was great, but one she managed to ignore. Picking up her root-bag she pushed a few discarded turnips into it before sauntering over to where her mother was sitting with the older women.

Little Face, for all her easy stance, was as breathless as herself. 'You did it! You did it! Do not look back now. I guarantee that he will be outside our lodge within a few days; then we shall put the second part of our plan into action.'

Her clan-grandmothers laughed and joked and pushed at one another, remembering with pleasure their own courting days and how they'd led the young men a dance. Only Little Face had eyes for the departing hunters, but as she watched them laugh and taunt Winter Man, her smile faded and her lips turned to a thin line of concern.

'What is it?' Moon Hawk asked.

The smile again in place, her eyes darted back to her daughter. 'Nothing,' Little Face insisted. 'Everything went well. Didn't I say it would? No man of his reputation could possibly resist such a challenge. His friends would laugh him to the peaks of the Shining Mountains and back!'

Moon Hawk smiled as her mother curled a protective arm about her shoulders and ushered her back into the welcoming throng of her relatives, but, deep within, her heart did not beat with the same fervour that it had. She wanted Winter Man for her husband, had always wanted him, but was this the best way of gaining what she sought? It wasn't altogether honourable.

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