

# The Whisper

by

*Bud Morris*

[www.BudMorris.net](http://www.BudMorris.net)

"Yi-Yi-Yiii!"

Little Fox awakened instantly from a deep sleep the moment the alarm was sounded. Grabbing his small bow and arrows, he rushed out of the family tepee and into the forest that surrounded the Indian village. The twelve-year-old Indian boy melted silently into the darkness among the trees. When he was safely away from the village, he squirmed under the rotting trunk of a large fallen tree and nocked an arrow in defensive readiness.

From the relative security of his position the Little Fox could hear the horses thunder away from the village remuda. He sensed, more than heard Indian warriors creeping through the forest, but could not differentiate the attackers from the defenders of the village. His safety lay in motionless patience. The young Indian scarcely moved a muscle until dawn began to lighten the eastern sky.

All appeared to be quiet as the light of dawn began filtering into the forest. The young Sioux Indian cautiously eased himself out of his hiding place. With every sense alert he started working his silent way back to the village. Soon he detected other children slipping from shadow to shadow as they made their way home. Tenseness showed on every face until they could make out the squaws tending their cooking fires by their tepees. Then animated conversation took over as they rushed into the village to find out what had happened. But their curiosity had to await the return of the braves who had rushed out to recover their stolen horses.

Most of the braves did not return until the third day. They had only recovered about half of the horses. Wounded Bear, the Little Fox's father, was not with them. Neither was the small pony that the Little Fox had been allowed to ride. The body of a dead brave was tied across one of the horses. The Little Fox's heart ached as the widowed squaw took up the death wail when she recognized the victim. He wondered if his mother would soon be wailing too.

The Little Fox's anxiety for his Father increased throughout the night. About noon the next day, just when the young boy's Indian stoicism was about to fail, the Wounded Bear came riding in to the village on a fine-looking stallion. The brave dismounted painfully, and went straight to his tepee. He had taken an arrow in the fleshy part of the back of his shoulder during the initial attack on the village, but his wound only made him the more determined to avenge himself on the attackers. He had caught up with one of them and taken his horse and his scalp. "Surely you have heard how terrible a wounded bear is," he quipped through his pain.

The Little Fox was furious at the loss of his pony. His anger smoldered for a week or so, and then burst into flames of determination to become an outstanding warrior. He spent virtually all his time practicing shooting with his bow and arrows, throwing his tomahawk or spear, and tracking his friends in the plains and forests. At the age of fourteen he killed a fair-sized black bear single-handed with his spear. He purchased a horse with its skin.

The superior prowess of the Little Fox was obvious to all. The village shaman urged him to purify himself for the vision quest. After a day of fasting, he confidently took his place in the sweat lodge by the river with half-a-dozen other youths a mite older than himself. The fire was lit to heat the stones, and the village elders painted symbols on each of the participants. The shaman led the group in chants until the stones were red hot. Then he began spooning water on the stones to produce steam. The sweating participants began pleading to the Great Spirit for guidance and wisdom in their lives. Slowly the participants began recalling their faults and misdeeds with tears of oppression and guilt.

After a seemingly endless time each of the other youths seemed to see a different manifestation of a distant brightness. A sense of peace and oneness with creation settled on them, and they were released to run to the river and dive in.

“But I didn’t feel anything except the heat and the sweating,” the Little Fox told the shaman.

“Then you are not cleansed,” the old man replied sympathetically. “You are not ready for a vision quest to seek a guiding animal spirit. You will have to try again next year.”

But the next year brought the same results—nothing in the soul of the young up-and-coming brave.

That year, while the Little Fox was fifteen years old, the braves recovered a young Sioux squaw from the Kiowa during their annual spring raids. Her name was Morning Mist. She had lost her mother at birth, and had been raised by a young white couple who had been ranching on the prairies. Her adoptive parents had been killed by the Kiowa when she was ten years old, and she had been a slave to a Kiowa medicine woman for four years. It was only natural that she be placed under the supervision of the aging medicine woman in the Sioux village.

Besides the usual duties of a squaw, the Morning Mist spent a lot of time gathering medicinal herbs for the medicine woman. She was blossoming into a beautiful young woman, but it was her poise that impressed the Little Fox. Somehow he sensed that she had a serenity that ran deeper than the normal Indian stoicism.

One day the Little Fox was hunting in the forest when he happened across her tracks on a bit of soft ground she had needed to cross to pick some herbs. She had been walking as skillfully as any brave, leaving little evidence of her passage. The young Indian took up

her trail as a challenge to see if he could follow her. He had trailed her with difficulty for several hours before he found her seated on a boulder beside an idyllic waterfall reading a book.

To his chagrin, the little squaw detected the Little Fox as he was slipping up on her. "Hello, mighty brave," she greeted him mischievously. "What brings you here just now?"

"The challenge of your trail," he answered admiringly. "You leave fewer signs than most of the braves do."

"Thank you," she replied. "My teacher was a Kiowa medicine woman who beat me if I left any careless signs on my trail."

"What's that?" the Little Fox queried, pointing to the book, "Part of your totem?"

"This in my Bible," the Morning Mist replied, holding it out for his examination. "It tells me the words of the true God."

"I hear nothing," he replied as he took the book from her and held it curiously to his ear.

"No," she answered, "It doesn't work that way. My white parents taught me how to follow the trails of the marks in the book. They lead us to God just as surely as my tracks led you to me today.

"Show me how to follow these trails," he replied.

"See this little mark?" she asked, pointing to an "A". "It is the footprint of the sound, 'Ah.' You have to learn the footprints of all the sounds. Then you can put them together to follow the trails of the words of God."

"A brave does not learn to follow trails on the ground in a day," the Morning Mist continued. "I will help you if you want me to, but it will take you several moons of tedious work to become skillful at following this kind of trail. It is called, 'Reading'"

For the next several months the Little Fox and the Morning Mist met at every opportunity for an hour or two of reading lessons. They went to their pre-determined rendezvous spots separately, being careful to leave no trails. It was not considered proper for young braves and squaws to fraternize, especially without supervision.

The Little Fox's initial motive was simply to learn this medicine of reading, but in spite of himself, he found that he enjoyed the company of the Morning Mist far more than that of any of the young men his age. She was more skilled in Indian wood lore than any of his male companions from the village, and she was modest about it. She was intelligent,

could think independently, and enjoyed sharing her thoughts with him. And her maidenly figure intrigued him far more than any other squaw he had ever seen.

Within a few weeks the Little Fox could sound out the words in the English Bible, but they made little sense to him. Slowly and patiently the young squaw began to teach him a bit of the English language as well. Almost imperceptibly he was beginning to get a concept of who the God of the Bible was.

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The Wounded Bear was killed in a raid on a Cheyenne village when the Little Fox was seventeen years old. The Indian youth was devastated by the wails of his mother and sisters, but he showed no emotion other than to praise his father as a great hunter and warrior. Being the only son, the Little Fox suddenly found himself head of the family.

The young Indian adjusted quickly to his new situation. He hunted tirelessly and skillfully, so there was no lack of meat in his mother's lodge, and plenty to share with others. His new responsibilities caused him to feel a need of superhuman guidance, forcing him to approach the shaman for a third session of purification at the sweat lodge.

"No!" the shaman responded. "It will not work. You must embark on a distant vision quest by yourself. You will search the highest crags of the sacred mountain for a place to fast. You will take your most precious possession as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit. You will not eat anything as you contemplate all that is going on in your life and your soul. You will focus on your faults, and when cleansing is granted your guiding animal spirit will come to you. It could take many sleeps, but if you persist it will work. Do you understand?"

"Yes," the Indian youth replied. "I will start tomorrow, on the new moon."

Taking nothing except his blanket, his weapons, and the Bowie knife that his father had taken from the body of a white man, The Little Fox began his journey to the sacred peak, just visible from his village on clear days. It took him three days to reach the mountain and another to climb up to the highest crags. There from heights that looked down on the nesting eagles, the Little Fox found a shallow cave, not over twenty feet deep. After leaving his Bowie knife in plain sight at the opening for a sacrifice to the Great Spirit, he lay down on his blanket inside the cave.

The cold of the mountain dawn found the Little Fox wrapped in his blanket sitting on the ledge in front of the cave. As he forced himself to think of his faults, he remembered

reading, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" in the Morning Mist's Bible. He began to understand that even his driving ambition to become a great warrior plundering other Indian villages and killing their braves was sin. He saw himself as thoroughly sinful, a robber and murderer at heart!

For the first time in his life the concept of sin being an affront to God began to fill the Little Fox with guilt and dread. As he contemplated throughout the day he began to question how fasting and sweating and sacrificing his possessions could possibly atone for his guilt.

By evening the Little Fox was physically weak from hunger and emotionally worn out from his load of guilt. He certainly did not feel at all cleansed as he crawled into the cave and rolled up in his blanket. Soon a fitful sleep claimed him.

Sometime in the middle of the night a fierce storm awoke the exhausted lad. The wind raged so hard at the mouth of the cave that huge chunks of rock were wrenched from its edges to fall noisily down the mountainside. Occasional great blasts of wind penetrated the cave and tore at his blanket.

The terrified youth shrank to the back of the cave where an indescribably dreadful horror far more disturbing than the terror of the storm gripped his soul. Suddenly the indistinct form of a huge bear appeared at the mouth of the cave. Though it seemed to have little substance to it, a swipe of its paw ripped more rock away from the entrance, allowing it to waddle into the cave. The apparition shook real water from its coat, sniffed the air, and walked right up to distraught boy. Little Fox could feel its warm fetid breath on his face.

"Brother Little Fox," the bear growled in the Sioux language, "I have come to be your guide. I will give you the strength to overcome your enemies. None will dare accuse you of wrong, for you will have my strength to destroy them. You will take many scalps with my help. I will make you great, and you will thank the Great Spirit for my help."

"No!" the distraught Indian lad shouted. "I don't need help committing more sins, I need cleansing from the sins I have already committed."

"Then we are not brothers, but enemies," the bear roared as it raised a paw to strike the boy. Then, as if displaced by some unseen force, it turned abruptly and faded away.

The Little Fox lay back, totally drained. He was just dropping off to sleep again when it seemed that a terrible thunder clap shook the mountain--only it didn't quit shaking. As the ground beneath him trembled violently, a huge vapid-looking buffalo bull squeezed its way into the cave. Its red eyes seemed to broadcast horror and malice everywhere they looked. "Little Fox," the buffalo grunted, "I have come to meet both your physical needs and spiritual needs throughout your life. I will see that you have plenty of meat in your lodge and many horses in your remuda. You will be at peace with the world and all

that is in it. You will be completely satisfied, and forget your faults. You will praise the Great Spirit for..."

"Never," the lad interrupted. Forgetting my faults will not cleanse me from them. I do not need your kind of help."

The earth shook more than ever as the great beast pawed at the floor of the cave, but the Little Fox stood his ground. "Then the stomachs of your household will never be satisfied," the buffalo bellowed as it disappeared into thin air.

The Little Fox dropped back into a troubled sleep on his blanket. This time he dreamed that he was falling off the mountain into an ocean of fire. Awakening suddenly to the smell of burning sulfur, he saw several fiery spheres of ball lightning skittering about the entrance to the cave. Psychedelic shadows danced on the walls as the horror of spiritual darkness again assailed the boy's soul. The balls of fire coalesced and contorted into the shape of a huge iridescent snake that glided up to youth.

"Little Fox," it hissed, "I am of old the messenger of light. Accept the serpent as your guide, and I will give you the power of deceit. You will be able to vanquish your enemies by treachery. You will be wealthy, and I will help you convince the world that there is no such thing as sin. I will..."

"Go away!" The Little Fox replied, "I need not deceit, but truth. Take this dread that surrounds you and leave me alone. Go!"

"We will be mortal enemies," the serpent spat out venomously as the vision began to fade, "And I will be waiting along your trails to strike your heels."

By this time there was no sleep left in the Little Fox. He hunched his shivering body against the back of the cave, staring into the empty darkness as the storm blew itself out. More and more stars began to appear in the sky, until the Milky Way angled across the mouth of the cave like a trail across the heavens.

As a glorious sunrise ushered in the day, the sound of a gentle breeze broke into the Little Fox's reverie. "Little Fox, come out of the dark," it seemed to whisper.

As the Little Fox stepped out of the cave the quiet voice continued, "You did well to refuse the spirits that enticed you, for they are evil. True peace and wisdom are found only on the trail of the Son of God. Follow it in the Bible and you will find that God sent Him to die to cleanse you from your sins. He sends His Holy Spirit to guide those who trust Him. Worship God!"

The Little Fox slowly rolled up his blanket and picked up his weapons. Finally he picked up the Bowie knife he had brought for the great spirit and started down the mountain towards home.

The moment the Little Fox re-entered the Indian village the shaman called him to his tepee. "Did you find a spirit guide?" the old man asked in a fatherly way.

"Yes," the Little Fox reported guardedly, knowing that the shaman would not be pleased that he had rejected three animal spirit guides.

"Which spirit did you hear?" the old man persisted.

"The whisper of a still small voice that brought me peace and instructed me how to find the trail I must follow," the youth replied.

"This is not the usual way, Little Fox," the shaman replied skeptically. "We will see how it goes for you without an animal spirit guide. Meanwhile, you will be called, 'The Whisper.'"

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The next day the Whisper tracked the Morning Mist to one of their favorite meeting spots. He found her prostrate on the ground sobbing out a deep internal anguish.

"Morning Mist," he called gently. Her head jerked up, her swollen eyes staring reproachfully at him.

"Leave me alone!" she said fiercely. "Go to your spirits and leave me alone." Mystified, he stumbled away without the slightest idea of what was wrong.

The rebuffed youth tried time and again to speak to the Morning Mist, but she avoided him at every turn of the way. He missed his reading lessons. How could he follow the trail of the Son of God without access to a Bible? But even more, he missed the girl herself. "Spirit of God," he prayed, "Please help me speak to the Morning Mist."

The Whisper tried to drown his anguish in work. He used his father's favorite horse to hunt for hours on end, often at great distances from the village. He brought field-dressed carcasses of deer from miles away to present them to his mother or the village widows. Occasionally he would get up the courage to leave one at the tepee of the medicine woman, but the Morning Mist remained as intangible as her name implied. "Holy Spirit," he often prayed, "Please show me how to win the Morning Mist."

One day a feeble-minded child of the village wandered into the forest and did not come home. When the Whisper heard that the child had been missing all night he headed into the forest to find it. The trail wandered aimlessly without purpose or destination, but

the young brave persisted until he found the lost child a return walk of several hour's from home.

"Follow me," the Whisper urged the lost child. "I'll show you the way home." They started out for the village, but the child turned aside at every little thing that caught the fancy of its feeble mind.

"That's not the way home," the frustrated guide would say. "But I want to go home this way," the child would answer. Eventually the Whisper had to gather the wandering child into his arms and carry it to its mother in the village.

"Father God," the Whisper prayed that evening, "Forgive me for wanting your Spirit to help me follow the trail that I have chosen instead of guiding me along the trail that You want me to travel. Help me learn to follow the guidance of your holy Spirit." Although the ache for the Morning Mist did not leave his heart, a peace that he could not understand made it more tolerable.

A few dawns later the Whisper went on foot to a picturesque lake not too far from the village. He had hoped to kill a deer there, but the old medicine woman had beaten him to the lake. She sat on an old deadfall canting the chant to the sunrise. No deer would come this morning.

The Whisper sat down a few feet from the medicine woman. The two of them watched the rising sun transform the thin mist over the water into a delicate golden shroud that vaguely obscured the silhouette of the landscape beyond the lake. Suddenly the shadow of a drifting cloud blotted out the golden rays of sunlight.

Turning to acknowledge the youth's presence, the old woman spoke. "I have learned to love the morning mist," she muttered tonelessly. "Why have you taken the golden sunshine from her heart?"

"I wish I knew what drives the sunshine from her heart, Grandmother," he whispered brokenly. "My soul rains tears because she will not speak to me."

"She will be here at dawn tomorrow," the old woman assured him as she rose to leave.

Early the next morning the Whisper found the Morning Mist sitting on the dead fall staring vacantly into the water. She had lost a lot of weight and the circles under her eyes were dark. Slipping up behind her, he placed his hands lightly on her shoulders. She seemed to shrink beneath his touch, but did not shrug him off.

"Morning Mist," he said softly. "God's holy Spirit told me to follow the trail of the Son of God in the Bible, but you are keeping it from me. I wish to resume reading the Bible with you."



“What happened on your vision quest?” she asked tremulously.

“First,” he said, looking toward the sacred mountain as if to re-visualize the scene, “I realized what a sinner I was. It was very wrong of me to want to rob and kill other Indians. Then the spirit of the bear came in the wind. When it left the spirit of the buffalo came in an earthquake. When it left the spirit of the snake came in a fire. Each of them offered to be my spirit guide, but none of them could take my guilt away. They were all so evil that I rejected them.

“Finally,” he finished, “A still small voice like a whisper told me to follow the trail of the Son of God in the Bible. He would take my guilt away, and God’s holy Spirit would be my spirit guide. That is why they call me the Whisper.”

The Morning Mist rose to her feet and turned to face him with tears in her eyes. “I have been wrong,” she whispered remorsefully. “I will start studying the trail of the Son of God with you again.” Then, rising up on her tip-toes, she pulled his face towards hers and kissed him on the lips before fleeing into the forest.

A warm glow filled the Whisper as he watched the girl’s lithe form disappear into the trees. He walked light-heartedly toward the village.

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The Whisper studied the Book of John with the Morning Mist whenever possible until winter interrupted them. He quickly came to understand the basic doctrines like the Trinity and salvation by grace through faith in Christ; but when the weather became too cold to study outdoors, their meetings came to an abrupt halt. The only way he could contrive to see her was to bring meat to the Medicine Woman’s tepee.

By the time the swollen buds on the trees were ready to pop into spring, the Whisper was absolutely consumed with desire for the Morning Mist. When his mother saw that his appetite had declined so much that he scarcely ate, she approached him alone in the tepee.

“Your heart cries for the Morning Mist?” she asked.

“How did you know?” he replied.

“Did you not realize that your mother would notice how often the two of you were absent from the village at the same time last year?” she answered. “Have I not watched you walk out of your way to pass the medicine woman’s tepee all winter? Have I not seen the little

squaw look at the ground with unseeing eyes whenever you are near? Do not those same eyes glow as they follow you when you have passed?"

"What shall I do, Mother?" He asked miserably. "I love her."

"You have had your cleansing and your vision quest," the woman mused. "There are more than enough of your father's horses left in the remuda to offer the medicine woman a rich gift. Go quickly and speak to the shaman, for the cruel Angry Cougar stares lustfully at the Morning Mist."

Fear gripped the Whisper's heart as he thought of someone else getting the Morning Mist. "Thank you my mother," he said as he rose to go to the shaman.

The Whisper stopped a few feet from the shaman's tepee and coughed unobtrusively.

"Yes?" the shaman greeted him as he came outside. "What does the Whisper desire?"

The Whisper's lips were dry. "I want the Morning Mist for my squaw," he replied shakily. "I have horses to give the medicine woman."

"The Whisper is young, and has not proven himself yet," the old man reminded him. "You have not been on any raids or stolen any horses. You have no scalps on your spear. You must follow the customs of the ancients."

"I am eighteen winters old," the Whisper replied. "My arrows fly as straight as any brave's in the village. I have brought more meat to the village since my father died than any other brave has provided. I can follow trails that many braves cannot see. But my guiding spirit does not permit me to kill or steal. Must I always be a bachelor?"

"It will be decided by the village council at the next full moon," the shaman pronounced decisively, turning to re-enter his tent.

Two weeks later a beautiful spring day forced its way up the mountainside. The lovesick Whisper saw the Morning Mist walk demurely past his mother's tepee as she wended her way into the forest. He waited an hour before leaving the village on the opposite side. When well away from the village he circled around and picked up her trail. He found her waiting for him beneath a rocky overhang hidden behind a clump of evergreens. She stared bashfully at her feet.

Whisper placed his hands on her shoulders. "Morning Mist," he said softly. "I love you." He felt a shiver go through her body as he spoke. "I have asked the shaman if I can have you as my squaw," he continued. "Are you willing?"

"I am, Whisper," she answered readily, raising her eyes to his. "I love you too. We can follow the trail of the Son of God together, hand-in-hand."

"The shaman says I have to prove myself first."

“Surely you will not kill or steal?” she pled.

“I told him that my guiding Spirit forbids it,” he assured her. “I will have to try to prove myself in other ways.”

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The Whisper’s case came before the council the next week. After much discussion, it was decided that the voice the Little Fox had heard on the sacred mountain could not have been from the Great Spirit if it forbade raiding other tribes. All the other guiding spirits actually aided the braves during such raids.

“No,” the Little Fox agreed, “It was not from the Great Spirit, but from the true God, who sent His Son to die for our sins. The spirits of the bear, the buffalo, and the snake came to me, but they encouraged me to sin instead of cleansing me. I sent them away, for I will only follow the true God’s Holy Spirit!”

“Why are we still discussing this?” The Angry Cougar interjected. “The Little Fox has insulted the animal spirit guides, and is afraid to prove himself in valor. He is but a weakling and a dreamer, and is not qualified for marriage according to our customs.”

A heavy silence settled on the gathering around the council fire. Finally the shaman spoke.

“We do not acknowledge the spirit of the whisper, Little Fox. You will bring the anger of the Great Spirit on our village if you stay here. You must leave at once.”

“I will leave if you fear for me to stay;” the Little Fox answered humbly, “But the Morning Mist has followed the same God as I do almost since birth. I will give the medicine woman our four spotted horses for her if you will let me take her with me as my wife. They are some of the best in the remuda.”

After consulting the medicine woman, the council agreed to let the Little Fox take the Morning Mist with him as his squaw.

“No!” shouted the Angry Cougar. “I too desire the Morning Mist for my squaw. According to our customs, I challenge the cowardly Little Fox to a fight to the death for the little squaw.”

“It shall be settled as the Angry Cougar demands,” the chief pronounced. “Let us go to the fighting pit.”

The Little Fox was about to decline for conscience sake, but the thought of the Morning Mist having to live with such a bully as the Angry Cougar for the rest of her life dissuaded him. Grabbing his knife from its sheath, he followed the challenger into the pit. As they faced off Little Fox noted that the Angry Cougar held his knife in his left hand

The two opponents, one in full manhood and the other but a well-developed youth circled each other warily with drawn knives. Suddenly the Angry Cougar charged, stabbing downward at the Little Fox's neck. The youth caught the bigger brave's blade on his own, warding it off skillfully as he backed away. He was at once aware that besides being left-handed, his opponent was unbelievably strong. He would have to fight this battle with cunning and skill rather than brute force.

Again and again the bigger brave charged, while the Little Fox sidestepped or parried his lethal blade. Both fighters glistened with sweat as they maneuvered in the pit. The Little Fox was knocked down three times, but was always able to regain his feet before the bigger man could harm him.

Just when the Little Fox was beginning to wonder how much longer he could last before his strength gave out, he detected a pattern in his opponents attacks. If his charges were thwarted, he generally steered his momentum past the left side of his opponent in order to avoid the knife in his right hand. He always pivoted to keep facing his enemy as he went by.

On the next charge, the Little Fox planted his right foot as he caught his opponent's raised blade on his own. Instead of backing away as he had been doing, he leaned into his knife with all his strength. His surprise move gave him the leverage on his pivoting opponent's upstretched arm, unbalancing him. As the brave back-stepped to regain his balance, Little Fox hooked his leg with his own left foot, tripping him backwards.

The Little Fox threw himself onto the Angry Cougar's falling body. They landed with Little Fox's left hip pinning the Angry Cougar's knife hand to the ground and the point of his blade resting firmly against the side of the defeated challenger's throat.

"Do not move, Angry Cougar," the youth warned the helpless brave, twisting his blade menacingly against his enemy's throat.

"Do you agree before the council to relinquish all claims to the Morning Mist?"

"I do," the Angry Cougar gritted out sullenly. "You were lucky."

"You may rise, I have no desire to harm you," the Little Fox continued, ignoring the insult as he stepped away from his opponent.

Little Fox tied his few belongings on the stallion that he usually rode. The shaman brought a fine little horse that the medicine woman, who really had learned to love the Morning Mist, was giving to the bride. The bridegroom squatted expectantly across the embers of the council fire from the other braves. The village squaws wrapped the

Morning Mist in a blanket and carried her to him. "Here is your squaw, Little Fox," the shaman announced as the women deposited her at his feet. "I fear for your pathway together without an animal spirit to guide you." Little Fox concluded the abbreviated marriage ceremony by declaring, "You are mine," as he tapped his bride's bundled form gently with an arrow as if he were counting coo on her.

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The outcast couple rode slowly into the forest with the Little Fox in the lead. When they were well out of sight of the village, He turned towards that idyllic spot by the waterfall where their friendship had begun. They spent their nuptial night there, under the western stars that glittered through the treetops like a giant chandelier.

"Whisper," the Morning Mist addressed him as the light of dawn intruded on their privacy.

"They took that name away from me," he answered ruefully.

"You will always be the 'Whisper' to me, she answered. Does it not thrill me every time you whisper love to me? But," she continued, "I will call you 'Elijah,' after the prophet that heard the still small voice, if you will call me 'Misty,' like my white parents did. They were the first people who really loved me."

Elijah and Misty spent a few blissful days together in the seclusion of the forest as they contemplated what they should do. He killed a deer, and she prepared enough jerky for a longer journey. They needed to get further away from the village that feared their presence.

"We cannot go to any of the Sioux," Elijah reasoned. "They will all fear that we will bring the wrath of the Great Spirit on them."

"Most of the white men would despise us because we are Indians," Misty added. "There were some Christian Sioux on the ranch where I was raised," she continued, "That is why my white parents were allowed to raise me, but I do not remember where that was."

"Tell me what it was like," Elijah urged her. "Maybe we can find it?"

"I remember," Misty reminisced, "that it was at the foot of a very tall mountain, on a large stream that watered the cattle. They called it the 'King's Cross Ranch because my parents' name was 'King,' and their brand was the cross."

“We must find that place,” Elijah mused. “Other Christians will help us follow the trail of Christ. We will pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us to His people.” Right then and there the Christian Indian couple began the habit of praying together.

“The sun rose on the far side of the mountains,” Misty remembered later; so the youthful couple headed for the western edge of the mountain range they were in. Within a week they were dropping off the western slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains onto the Colorado plains that spread out beneath them.

Turning south by chance, they rode for a day and a half before they came across a ranch house nestled at the foot of the mountains. “We can inquire about the King’s Cross Ranch there,” Misty suggested. “They may be able to steer us in the right direction.”

The Indian couple was scarcely within earshot of the house when a cowpoke on the porch called for them to stop. He was covering them with a rifle, and there was nothing friendly about his demeanor.

“You thievin’ Injuns better make yerselves scarce a’fore I start shootin’,” the cowboy called out.

Elijah did not understand enough English to know exactly what was said, but the general meaning was clear enough. He turned his horse to retreat, but Misty rode closer to the house.

“Sir,” she addressed the irate man in perfect English. “We are not here to steal anything. We just need to ask directions to the Kings Cross Ranch, if you’ve heard of it.”

“Ya speak good English,” the cowpoke replied, lowering his rifle a mite. “I’m Harry. What do yas want with the King’s boys?”

“I was raised by the Kings before they were attacked by the Kiowa,” she replied. “We were hoping to find some Christian Indians that I used to know there.”

“Some Kings still owns the ranch,” the cowpoke responded, easing the hammer on his gun back down, “Un I’ve heard that there’s some Christian heathens around there too. Foller along the mountains fer about seventy-five er eighty miles till yas reach the Crestone Creek un you’ll find the ranch house just acrost the water. I’ll tell the guys not ta bother yas none.”

“Thank you,” the little squaw murmured. “You can’t imagine how much we appreciate your help.”

Elijah and Misty camped in some trees along a small creek an hour or more south of Harry’s ranch that evening. Well after dark they heard a group of horsemen moving a bunch of cattle up the creek towards the mountains.

“That’s got to be rustlers,” Misty whispered to her husband. “You follow them while I ride back to the ranch and tell Harry. They think it’s the Indians that are stealing their cattle.”

Elijah followed the rustlers, who drove the cattle a ways up a small insignificant-looking canyon and camped at a narrow spot, keeping the cattle from returning to the grass lands. After memorizing a few landmarks, the Indian returned to where he and Misty had separated, awaiting the arrival of help.

A group of ten or twelve armed cowboys arrived at the Indian’s campsite well before dawn. With Misty translating, Elijah was able to tell them where the rustlers were hiding.

“That’s Horse Creek Canyon,” the ranch foreman concluded from Elijah’s description. “Everyone says it’s a blind canyon, but they’s found a way ta sneak cattle into the mountains through it.”

“We can surround them in the darkness,” Elijah assured them, “and probably capture them without a fight at dawn.”

“Lead the way,” Harry urged him. “We’d like ta put a stop ta this rustlin’ un get back on good terms with the Injuns.”

With his superior night vision Elijah was able to station the cowboys in excellent offensive positions around the sleeping rustlers. When the first rustler arose, Harry called out that they were surrounded, and ordered them to surrender. They were able to capture all of the rustlers without firing a shot.

Before leaving with his prisoners, Harry scribbled a note for Elijah and Misty:

*These are good injuns who alerted us ta rustlers un helped us capture um. Treat um right.*

*Harry*

*(Foreman ov the Capital K)*

Two days later Elijah and Misty crossed the creek and rode unchallenged right up to the Kings Cross ranch house. Elijah hung back timidly while Misty banged the huge brass knocker against the door three times, just as she used to do as a child. After a moment a well-preserved middle-aged woman opened the door, wiping a stray wisp of grey hair from the side of her forehead.

“Mom,” Misty squealed, gathering the surprised woman joyfully into her arms. “I thought I’d never see you again.”

“Misty,” the older woman responded, clinging to her daughter tearfully. “You don’t know how I’ve prayed for this!”

After a long moment, Misty pulled away. “This is my husband, Elijah,” she said, pulling him forward. “He brought me home so we could be with other Christians.”

Hardly comprehending what was happening, Elijah was instantly drawn into a big hug from Mrs. King. “Welcome to our home, Son,” she breathed out earnestly as she released him. “May the Lord bless your lives together.” Then, seeing that he did not understand, she repeated it all in perfect Sioux.

“You speak our language?” he asked incredulously.

”Sure,” she assured him. “Most of our friends are Sioux.”

“Do they follow the trail of the Son of God?” he asked anxiously.

“I’m happy to say that they do,” the older woman replied. Then, seeing his smile, she continued, “And I’m glad that it pleases you.”

“Mom?” Misty queried, “How have you been doing without Dad?”

Mrs. King looked blankly at her long-lost daughter for a moment before she comprehended what she meant. “He didn’t die Misty. The Kiowa got three arrows into him before our Sioux friends arrived and drove them away, but the Lord pulled him through. Nothing has changed here except that we have been mourning the loss of our beloved daughter.”

“Mom,” Misty blurted out through happy tears, “I thought you were both dead. I had my Bible with me when I was captured, and it has been my only comfort until Elijah fell in love with me.”

Suddenly Mrs. King exclaimed, “I don’t know what’s the matter with me! Misty, you and Elijah run out and raise a white flag on the cupola of the horse barn. That’ll bring Dad a-flyin’ when he sees it. Then put your horses up while I start supper.”

“You’ll like Dad,” Misty assured Elijah as they walked back from the barn to the house. When I introduce you to him, he will greet you by taking your right hand in his and shaking it gently up and down. Return his shake with about the same amount of pressure, and let go when he does. When he sees that you don’t speak much English he will switch to Sioux so you can understand him. Don’t be anxious, he will accept you into the family as readily as Mom did.”

When supper was over and experiences had been rehashed, Mrs. King started to put the married couple in Misty’s old room.

“Better wait a bit on that, Momma,” Mr. King advised. “Elijah’s had a pretty stressful day, and I’d bet my new pony he’d rather sleep out under the stars. We’re not trying to make a white man out of him.”



“Of course,” she agreed, “I wasn’t thinking too straight, was I?”

“Thanks, Dad,” Misty allowed. “I’ll probably feel less cooped up out there myself, after all these years without a house. We’ll see you in the morning.”

The first things Mr. King did to make Elijah feel accepted into the family was to trust him with a gun. The Winchester repeating rifles had just come out, and after the rancher had taught him how to shoot he loaned him his personal one. Elijah brought several deer back to the ranch that week, and Misty tanned their hides. She sewed them into elaborately decorated buckskin clothing for her husband and herself. Within a few weeks the Indian had become a crack shot, killing many wolves in the vicinity of the ranch. He was able to buy his own rifle from the money he got from his wolf, cougar, and even occasional bear hides.

Misty and Elijah initially took up residence in the Christian Sioux village at the edge of the forest, about ten miles from the King Cross ranch. The village had an Indian church pastored by a converted shaman who loved the Lord and studied His word continually. Elijah drank in His soul-stirring sermons, and grew rapidly in the Lord. He was able to study the Lord’s Word more and more independently as his English improved.

Elijah’s ability as a tracker became legendary with the white community. He was frequently hired to track everything from missing people who had gotten lost or injured in the wilderness to outlaws being chased by the law.

Mrs. King invited Misty and Elijah to the ranch house for supper about a year after they had come to the area. The rancher and his wife were sitting on the porch when the younger couple rode up. Observing the tender way that Elijah helped his pregnant wife off her horse, Mr. King remarked, “We couldn’t have picked a better husband for Misty if we had gotten the chance.”

“No,” his wife agreed. “It’s pretty obvious that the Lord himself made that choice. Isn’t it fun to be around such a happy couple?”

Within a short time Elijah began to realize that the nomadic ways of the Native American were doomed with the arrival of the white man. The Indians’ only chance for independent survival was to change with the times. He began working as a cowboy at the ranch, and soon became a top cowhand. Misty had been an American citizen by adoption, and Elijah claimed citizenship by marriage to her, so they could not be forced into any Indian reservations.

The younger couple moved into the ranch house just before their second child was born. The Kings built a small retirement home about half-way between the Christian Sioux’s village and the ranch headquarters, where they would be less prone to interfere with the younger couple’s privacy. Their fellowship with these Indians, who were not accepted in either the white man’s culture or their own, was much appreciated. They deeded the ranch over to Elijah and Misty King long before they died.

Elijah hired all the Indians from the village who were willing to work on the ranch. The discipline of regular employment was difficult for them to adjust to, but his patience won most of them over. He encouraged the Indians to find a niche in the changing world instead of futilely resisting the inevitable.

Misty and Elijah raised four children, hiring a tutor to educate them. Two of them ended up with college degrees, and they all choose to follow Christ. When the old pastor of the Indian church died, Elijah was the natural choice to replace him. His oldest son took charge of the ranch, and Elijah and Misty moved into the King's vacant retirement house.