

CHAPTER ONE

Isaac

*Late Second Month (February) 1756
Northampton County, Pennsylvania*

Even before we saw the smoke, I smelled it. Not the sweet, welcoming scent that curled from a frontier cabin's chimney but a faint yet acrid odor that foretold a scorching destruction.

I scanned the barren treetops on both sides of the road, listening. No other sound accompanied the soft crunching of snow beneath our moccasins. Still, the skin on my shoulders tightened and prickled.

"Isaac." Beside me, Sam Milham backhanded my arm and stopped. His pale-blue eyes narrowed beneath the beaver fur of his woolen cap as he scanned the clear sky and surrounding forest. Finally, he jutted his chin toward the summit fifty paces ahead. "That way."

Gripping the arms of our travois tighter, I set out for the crest. My longer strides and the weight of his ration

sack put me several steps ahead of him, but he caught up when I slowed.

Thick gray smoke rose from a clearing in the trees, about one hundred and fifty yards into the vale below and thirty yards east of the road. Dense haze blanketed the area, its concentration diminishing as the wind drove it southeastward.

Sam swore. "It's a settler plantation. You think it's Wolf Clan?"

God forbid it. But with the increasing war parties that ravaged the frontier, that seemed more likely than an inadvertent cabin or barn fire. "Let's go." I plunged through the ankle-deep snow as quickly as the road's slope allowed.

We had almost reached the wagon path to the plantation when gunshots rang out. A woman's cry resonated through the trees, and whoops followed. Moments later a shriek pierced the air. Then silence.

I stopped, lowering the travois to the ground, then crept into the wood. My heart pounded, stealing my breath. Far off, a hawk screeled. Distant sounds of laughter echoed.

"They're intent on revenge." Sam's coarse whisper came from behind. "We can do nothing."

We didn't know that. Not for certain.

Navigating the trees, I headed for the upwind end of the clearing. Sam cursed again but followed.

None of what I'd seen and heard in our village last month—the warriors' reprehensible stories, the scalps they displayed atop spears, or the bound, exhausted

captives they dragged behind them—prepared me for what awaited in the glade.

The cabin smoldered, one end still burning. Flames had already blackened the barn beyond. Amidst the smoke and floating ash, bodies lay strewn—a man and a boy of possibly fourteen near the barn, a younger boy by the cabin, and a woman at the edge of the wood. Crystalized blood stained the snow around their heads, confirming their fate.

Bitterness rose to my throat, and I swallowed it before it choked me. Surely this family had committed no offense, yet they had been butchered like animals.

As I neared the prostrate woman, four buckskin-clad warriors trotted from between the cabin and barn, their scalp locks swinging. Only the leader, who held a hunting gun against his shoulder, didn't use an arm to shield his nose and mouth from the pungent smoke.

They emerged from the haze, and the leader's lips contorted into a sneer. The contrast of white teeth against his black-painted face added to its malice. "Walks In Two Worlds," he called in Lenape. "Has the half-breed and his yellow-haired friend finally decided to join us?"

The others snickered and lowered their arms, baring their faces.

Wolf Clan indeed. Walks In Two Worlds was what that clan's warriors from the west, those who had forsaken our tribe's peace with the province, called me with contempt. Their thin frames and smooth skin purported they were younger than I. Even their leader

had likely seen no more than twenty winters. Already they were murderers.

“These people did nothing to you!” I started toward them, shaking with anger. For the first time in many months, speaking our native language felt foreign. “Have you no conscience?”

The leader stopped five paces from where I stood, his expression sobering. Then his smirk returned. “What would our great sachems say now, seeing the one who once spewed pleadings for peace now consumed by fury?” He swept out his hand. “They took what was not theirs—our land. We are taking it back.”

Sam grabbed my arm, halting my advance.

A child’s shrieks carried from within the forest, then another warrior emerged with a young boy who flailed and cried out for his mama. As they approached, the warrior, no older than fifteen winters, exuded the pride of a young hunter who’d shot his first deer.

“I told you I would find him.” He dropped the boy at his feet, then grabbed the child’s tousled brown hair and unsheathed the knife at his waist.

Charging forward, I knocked the knife from his hand and shoved him to the ground. “Coward! He is a child.”

The young warrior jumped to his feet, glaring. “So were William Penn’s sons, once. If we had destroyed them in their youth, this land would still be ours. Our families would be thriving here, not starving and dying of white man’s sickness.”

I stood over the trembling boy. “Taking his life will neither right the wrongs nor bring back what we have lost. You will not lay a hand on him again.”

Sam drew his pistol. Despite his short stature and how his veins contained not a drop of Indian blood, his thirteen years in the wilderness, apt aim, and hand-fighting skill had earned him the reputation of a man not to be crossed. But gratitude for Sam’s unapologetic defense succumbed to recognition of my hypocrisy.

The young warrior spat at me. “Walks In Two Worlds speaks our language with a forked tongue. Though he is Lenape, he clings to the white man’s Quaker religion. Many applaud the peace he promotes, but he is a traitor to his suffering people.”

The leader swung his hunting gun toward me, but Sam trained his pistol on him and cocked the hammer before the leader could shoulder his weapon.

Scowling, the leader grabbed his gun by the barrel and dropped its butt to the ground. “The boy is ours.” Spread out behind him, the others made no move. Their glares confirmed their refusal to yield.

Our rations.

“Let’s trade, then.” I nodded at where the wagon path entered the clearing. “Two and a half bushels of shelled corn sit on a travois near the road. Take them.”

The young warrior scoffed. “Shelled corn?”

“Are you not only a coward but also a fool?” The furious words left my mouth before I could temper them. “Parched, the corn will feed your families. The boy will not.”

The leader jerked his head, and one of the others ran off to the path. After peering through the wood toward the road, he turned back and nodded.

“We go,” the leader said.

Sam didn’t stand down. “Leave the travois.”

The young warrior glowered at me as he trailed the others. “Walks In Two Worlds’ days are numbered,” he hissed as he passed us. “Soon he will walk only in one—the spirit world.”

Sam pursed his lips as they disappeared into the forest. “That was to feed *our* village, my friend.”

As if I didn’t know that. The two of us had spent weeks trapping beavers for pelts we needed to barter for corn and other rations, not to mention our week traveling to and from the trading post. The rations still filled his sack, but without the corn, the gnawing hunger in our bellies would not soon relent. “They would have taken his life.”

He snorted. “Now they will try to take yours.”



The warriors gone, I knelt beside the boy, who wore only breeches, a shirt, and stockings. He cowered when I placed my hand on his shoulder, drawing up his knees and covering his head with his arms.

“’Tis all right. I won’t hurt thee,” I said in English. After lifting him to his feet, I eased his hands from his face. He trembled as his teeth chattered, and the tears pooled in his bulging brown eyes slid down his cheeks.

When he tried to look around, I cupped his chin and held it fast. “My name is Isaac. What is thine?”

He gulped, his face deathly pale against the darker skin of my hand. “J-Jeremiah.” By the odor about him, he’d urinated on himself.

“We won’t let them harm thee, Jeremiah.” I doffed my buckskin frock and wrapped it around him. “Which way is thy closest neighbor?”

He turned, pointing to another trail into the wood, fortunately in the opposite direction of the road. As his gaze settled on the woman lying twenty-five paces away, he gasped. “Mama?” He pulled free and lurched toward her. “Mama!”

I caught him by the arm and stood, picking him up and pressing his face to my chest.

Behind us, wood creaked and groaned. The barn’s front wall slowly caved in, sending the remainder of the roof crashing down. Out rushed a hot billow of smoke thick with embers and ash, and I turned away.

Sam shielded his face in the crook of his arm and moved toward the trail. “Nothing more we can do.”

With Jeremiah still clutched to my chest, I followed. We had no choice but to pass the woman, and I couldn’t look away from her. She had been shot through the back and partially scalped, with much of her light hair now matted red.

Elisabeth.

I stopped, reminded of my beloved childhood friend. From behind, the long, wavy hair and slight frame could have been hers.

My burning throat clenched, and I moved on before I retched. The woman had lost her life, probably trying to save her boy's. Now he had no family, orphaned just as I'd been when I wasn't much younger than he.

As we tramped through the forest, Jeremiah clung to the front of my shirt. "I want Mama," he said again and again, sobbing. "I want my mama."

Tears smarted my eyes as I held him tighter. "I know thee does." And I did, for suddenly I longed for my mother as well.



*Chinkanning Indian Village
Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania*

By the time Sam and I reached our village four days later, word of our encounter with the warriors from the west had already arrived. Many of the people regarded me in silence, not even responding to my greeting as we walked between the lines of *wikwams*.

Part of me couldn't blame them. I'd traded much-needed corn for a white child's life, in their minds stealing food from their mouths and insulting our tribe by placing importance on a boy born of people who'd taken so much from them. Those who'd once esteemed my endeavors to advocate for the Lenape, both with the Six Nations who controlled us and with the province, now considered me a disgrace.

The only thing that troubled me more was the plight of young Jeremiah. The neighbor family had welcomed

him with much affection, sorrowfully promising to see to the burial of his kin, but no amount of love would expunge the agony of violently losing his parents and brothers. The despair that hollowed his stare had reawakened the anguish of losing my first parents, even though I had no memory of them.

Then came my summons. Our leader wished to speak with me.

Afterward, Sam stepped into pace beside me as I left the village seeking solace. "What did Teedyuscung want?"

I slowed but didn't look at him. "He said 'tis time I leave the village."

Sam grabbed my arm, stopping me. "No."

Despite myself, I smiled. In the two years I'd known him, rarely had he shown sentiment for anyone. He'd lived alone in the wilderness for years until our tribe had come north to our former village in Wyomink and met him nearby. He made no secret of how he often preferred solitude. "Thee will miss me, then?"

He crossed his arms. "After everything you've done for them, they now want you to leave because you confronted a bunch of boys playing warrior and called one a coward?"

I shook my head. The fault was mine alone. "The wrath I showed has undermined the gentleness and reconciliation I've always encouraged. They think I've sided with the settlers. Teedyuscung also believes I must leave for my own safety. The warrior I shamed vows revenge, and I will not retaliate. Teedyuscung fears my life will be quickly taken."

Sam clapped a hand on my shoulder. “Not while I’m around, my friend.”

I matched his gesture, obliged. Despite our ten-year age difference and how he dismissed the nonviolence I embraced, his loyalty was unparalleled. “I thank thee, but Teedyuscung is right.” Releasing his shoulder, I started to walk again. To where, I didn’t know, but I could not remain still. “I cannot stay here any longer. Too many now forsake peace, and my strivings for harmony are no longer welcome, even amongst my own Turtle Clan.”

Even Teedyuscung, a fellow Turtle and once a close companion in building the chain of friendship between the Lenape and the province, had turned to retaliation of the most vile kind. “Despite our differences now, he wishes no harm come to me. ’Tis time I returned to Horsham.”

“No,” he said again, this time seizing my arm.

“Sam, I’d decided even before he summoned me. More than two years have passed since I’ve seen my family. Never did I intend to stay away so long. The tribe will be moving to Diahoga when the cold spell ends, and I cannot travel any farther from home.” I sighed and clasped his shoulder again. “Lord willing, I leave tomorrow.”

Clenching his jaw, he stalked away. “Or maybe you’re a coward as well, Isaac Lukens.”

Maybe I was.



Lecha River Valley (Lehigh Valley), Pennsylvania

I didn't know what I loathed more, the biting cold that stung my face or the gnawing hunger that consumed my belly. After four days of travel by night, both made me yearn for a place to tarry, for the warmth of a blazing fire and a hot meal. But where?

I'd traveled the Nescopeck Path many times, but the blue-black veil of early morn and the newest blanket of snow obscured any familiarity with the landscape. Considering the moon's change in position since I'd passed Gnadenhutten—or the burned remains of the Moravian mission—surely I neared Bethlehem.

Or perhaps my disorientation came from exhaustion. Never had I longed for home more, and that pushed me on despite the ache of my limbs from plodding through snow since nightfall. With the mountainous terrain now miles behind me, the promise of easier travel over rolling hills kept me moving.

Wind clicked the bare branches high above me, and an owl hooted in the distance, breaking the hushed stillness of the snow. Something rustled within the wood, heightening my senses. I glanced through the trees on either side, searching for the glow of eyes. 'Twasn't the first time I'd sensed animal presence along the path, and hopefully, whatever it was didn't share my level of hunger.

Just as my fingers found the bone haft of the knife sheathed at my waist, the sound of movement through the snow spun me around.

Nothing there. I listened for several moments, and at hearing only silence, turned to continue. Fifteen paces ahead, a silhouette stepped from behind a tree at the road's edge, a hunting gun pointed at me. A shorter shadow emerged onto the path behind him, his gun also at the ready.

"What's your name and vher are you going?" the taller one asked.

I held out my hands. "Please. I—"

"He has a knife," the other yelled.

Footsteps crunched behind me, turning me around again. A thunderous sound echoed, and a blow to my back staggered me. I tried to face my attacker, but the fire that seared through my side spun the world atilt.

When I opened my eyes, four men stood above me, two with guns trained on my face. The beating of my heart thudded in my ears. "Please," I rasped. Every breath intensified the agony that sliced through me. "I mean thee . . . no harm."

"Vhat?" One of them knelt beside me and leaned closer. "Ach, I know dis man." He huffed. "You shot da Quaker peacemaker who lives vith da Lenape."

Shot?

"How was I supposed to know that, him travelin' by night an' dressed like a savage?" a gruff voice said. "He coulda been traveling with others, looking to ambush like the ones that massacred Hayes' militia."

“Looks a whole lot more Indian than Quaker to me,” another voice said, followed by guffaws from at least two of them.

“*Ruhe!*” A hand clutched my arm as they provided the silence he demanded. “What’s your name again?”

I swallowed, gritting my teeth. “Isaac . . . Lukens.”

“*Ja.*” He stood. “Shtand him up.”

“What’ll we do with him?”

“I vill take him to Tom McCue’s. Now help me shtand him up.”

Hands gripped my arms and heaved me to my feet.

The pain exploded into engulfing blackness.



The brightening deep-blue sky of dawn stretched above me. My side throbbed, the pain sharpening to a torment that stole my breath with every jostle. I lifted my head but then dropped it back onto the hay beneath me. Wooden wagon sides rose around me, and a thick blanket that smelled of damp wool and livestock covered my body.

So tired. My eyes closed, but I forced them open. Where was I, and where was I being taken?

The wagon jolted through a rut, forcing a groan from deep in my throat. I held my breath until the sting eased, then moved my hand to where it hurt most. Sticky warmth soaked my shirt. When I pulled my arm from beneath the blanket, blood stained my hand.

Aye. The men on the Nescopeck Path, the crack of the hunting gun, the insufferable pain. A destination mentioned, but what was it? I couldn't remember.

Another jar of the wagon brought a grunt through clenched teeth.

"Ve're halfvay der." The booming voice came from somewhere above my head. "My name is Dieter Kolb. Vher ver you going?"

"Horsham. North of Philadelphia." Despair flooded me. With a bullet wound, 'twould be days before I could finish my journey.

"*Gut*. You vill be safe vher I take you—and safer yet when you get to your Horsham."

Safe? I desired not safety but peace. Peace between the people of my father, white settlers seeking religious freedom in America, and those of my mother, the Lenape who'd long inhabited the lands but had them stripped away. Reconciliation now seemed hopeless.

I closed my eyes, my heart rent. For the second time in less than three years, I was taking leave of a place where I didn't belong. I hadn't found my mother's or father's family, and I could only hope the Friends who'd reared me would extend love and grace despite the selfishness I'd displayed in departing from them.

