

## SUMMER



SPRING OF 1865, NEAR THE BIG HORN MOUNTAINS,  
WYOMING

**B**rown Hawk was riding hard towards home, a large cabin in the mountains of Wyoming, near Black Tooth. It was a hard life, but he preferred to live on his own with his wife, Little Bird, instead of with his tribe.

Hawk smiled at the thought of his little wife, shaking his head in wonder as he rode closer to home. They were getting older now, but their love was still strong. It had not always been that way before they left the main tribe to live on their own.

He had been away with his friend, Samuel Fox, on a mission for the government. Brown Hawk—Hawk, to his friends—took a page from Samuel's book and made a life for himself away from the Cheyenne tribe. He worked for the government and the law enforcement agencies, tracking criminals, and he made damn good money at it. On his ranch, every spring, Samuel Fox, his son Brenden, and Hawk rode after wild mustangs in the mountains. The air was cold and the mustangs fast and wild, but this life was so

invigorating. They tamed them and sold them for top dollar in the autumn. They had gained a reputation for having the best horses in the country. Usually, by early summer, they had all they needed. It normally took until early autumn before they had the horses broken to ride, ready for sale.

Hawk and four of his closest friends and fellow dog soldiers had made their home in the mountains of Wyoming. Hawk and his friends had worked hard down through the years. Bone breaking work and long hours were normal for the first five years. Their dedication and loyalty to Hawk and Little Bird had certainly paid off for them and their families.

Hawk was riding in the lead. His mind was not on what he was doing. It was in the past. He was thinking about the first years of his marriage and the struggles with the tribe.

He knew the reason he was having trouble concentrating on the present. His daughter, Summer, was returning for the spring and summer. He and his wife missed her while she was away in the autumn and winter. It was a heartbreaking time for them both. He understood the necessity, but it didn't make it hurt any less. Every year at this time, he would wonder back all those years in his mind. His friends knew and teased him about his melancholy, but it didn't deter him. He preferred going for long rides by himself to reminisce. Little Bird always seemed a little sadder by the middle of winter, also, but she tried to keep a stiff upper lip. He would see her brushing a tear away occasionally or hear her sigh a lonely sigh. He would see her staring off to the south with a wishful look in her eye.

Hawk fell into his remembrances as he rode with his friends for home after a successful hunting trip on this particular day.

Soon, Samuel and Summer would show up—Samuel, to drop off their shared daughter and to start the hunt for the wild horses. In the fall, when the horses were ready for market, Hawk and his friends would take their Summer back to Samuel's ranch with him.

Samuel, Hawk, Small Bear and White Eagle would then take

their horses to Fort Kearney to sell them to the government. After that, Hawk and his friends rode home without Summer and would not see her again until spring.



#### TEN YEARS EARLIER

Hawk was a dog soldier for his Cheyenne tribe and a damn good one. One who made his mother and father proud. It took much hard work and training, but he was one of the best of the warriors in his tribe. He had wealth already in his young life, which was something unusual at his age of twenty summers. He knew how to trade with the settlers and the army. He also learned to use the banks from his childhood friend, Samuel. He was very smart; he knew what the soldiers and settlers wanted and what he needed. He dressed like a white man when he needed to and wore his buckskins and feathers when his tribe needed him. He learned to live in both worlds. He was young and strong and in love with life. His training gave him many muscles, and he was trained to kill in many ways. He was fearless in battle and had won many. Just the sight of him with his six-foot-five-inch body of muscles frightened many. His tribe looked up to him and valued his opinion. He would be a leader someday, and he felt he was ready.

He had married the woman he had fallen in love with many years ago when she was still a child. Little Bird was his heart and very breath; he loved her so much. His father told him it made him weak to love a woman that much, but Hawk never listened. Those were the old ways and he didn't want to live that way anymore. He wanted what his friend, Samuel, had, money and a home for his family, to be the head of his household and protect his wife and any children they may have. Unfortunately, Little Bird never conceived. She yearned for a child and prayed for a child, but it never happened. Instead, she helped the old woman of the tribe watch the

children in her spare time, but it made her sad afterward. She would come home and cry on Hawk's lap in his arms as he reassured her that someday her turn would come. But it never did, and she became quiet and reserved. Her spirit was broken, and Hawk didn't know how to help her. His little wife was a sad shell of the woman she had been, and it broke his heart. The other women of the tribe avoided her, taunting her and belittling her while he was gone. He almost hated to leave, for fear one of the women would hurt her. Many of the women threw themselves at him right in front of her, telling him they would give him a brave son to raise. He always ignored them, but Little Bird could see how it saddened him not having a child of his own, a son he could raise to take over for him and inherit all he worked so hard for.

One day, he had come home to find her crying because the women had been especially cruel to her. Little Bird told him to go to Running Dog's daughter and lay with her, so he could have a child.

Hawk stood straight up and frowned at her. This has gone on far too long, and he would tolerate it no longer. He went to the chief and told him that he and Little Bird would leave the tribe if he didn't do something about their cruelty to his wife.

The chief and the tribe received many benefits from Hawk. He made their life much easier and was a hero to the tribe.

That night, every father whipped their daughters for their cruelty in public and instructed them to leave Little Bird alone. The daughters all came to their tee pee and apologized, pledging to never hurt Little Bird again. They grew to hate her even more because of the punishment, but they knew to leave her alone.



A FEW WEEKS LATER, some of the men were attacked by the Crow as they were hunting buffalo near one of the lakes. Five of their men were ambushed and killed. Hawk and some of his men were called

on to find out who had committed this atrocity. They were at peace with all the other tribes—supposedly.

One lone survivor explained it was the Crow who had attacked them. He could tell by the feathers.

Little Bird made him a meal of dried bison mixed with berries and animal fat (pemmican) to take along, with some dried deer jerky and some fruit. She knew he might be gone for days before he found what he wanted and returned home. She kissed him good bye, begging him to stay safe and come home to her.

Hawk and six of his best men went out to follow the trail, to seek justice for their friends who were murdered. They had ridden many miles before Running Wolf spotted the trail. They rode hard when they could and late into the night when the moon was full, into the mountains and through deep valleys. Running Wolf was their best tracker. He never lost sight of the trail. They followed quietly for days before they came to a wagon that held two young bodies. A man and woman were left for the animals to do with what they wished.

As Hawk searched the wagon for clues as to who these people were, he found some paperwork and a doll. Hawk was a tracker for the Pinkertons and he knew something was not right. Where was the child who belonged to this doll? He found some clothes for the adults and a child and the man still carried paper money and a gold watch. Why didn't the Indians who killed these people take the gold watch or the money? Where was the child? After a thorough search, the men took the time to bury the bodies and mark a crude grave.

They took a small rest and continued tracking until close to dark, when they came upon fresh horse droppings. Knowing they were getting close and it would be fully dark before they came upon these men, they decided to tie their horses near the stream and continue by foot to their camp.

Ten men, all renegades, sat around the campfire, laughing and poking a stick at something tied to the tree.

Running Wolf's eyes became large with shock when he saw

what they had tied and gagged at the tree. He signaled to Hawk to see what he had found. They all gathered around Hawk and Running Wolf.

The men signaled amongst themselves a plan, using sign language. All six men circled around the campsite. One man crawled next to the horses just outside the camp, which were tied to a rope stretched between two trees. Five others circled the laughing and obviously drunk men, hiding in the shadows. Hawk crawled up to the tree on his belly ready to cut the child loose as soon as the fighting started.

One quick signal and the horses were all cut loose, and the renegades were attacked by surprise. While the fighting was going on, Hawk cut the little one free. He ran back to his horse and sat her down, imploring her to be as quiet as a mouse. Then, he ran back to help with the fight. By the time he had returned, the fight was already over. The warriors were all drunk and easily killed.

While searching the men, Hawk found much gold in their pockets. This didn't make sense. Why did they have gold but leave money and a gold watch with the young couple? Then he thought about the situation. Indians had no use for paper money. Renegades avoided populated areas, so they would have no use for the watch, especially if they were strangers to trading with the white man. Gold was always the best. It was easily used throughout the mountains at trail stores or mining stores. These renegades planed on hiding out for a while to avoid being blamed for this.

The men quickly ran back to their horses, leaving the dead men for the animals to take care of. The little girl was sitting next to Hawk's horse, right where he left her. Her dress was torn, and she was dirty. she had the look of one in shock. She didn't speak.

"Did those men hurt you, little one? Did they touch you?" Hawk asked the child. She couldn't be more than five summers old. She began to shake uncontrollably, her teeth chattering. Fat tears rolling down her chubby cheeks. Hawk wrapped her in his blanket, and Running Wolf handed her up to him once he had mounted.

The others followed, each mounting and turning their horses toward home. The last two men led the captured horses. They would go to the slain comrade's families when they returned.

Hawk held the little girl tight, reassuring her everything would be all right until he felt her slump in his arms, sound asleep. He began asking for opinions from his men as to what to do with the child. He didn't want to get into trouble for having a white girl in the tribe. Her long blonde hair and blue eyes would surely give her away. He didn't know her story or what had happened to her.

Running Wolf suggested giving her to a settlement or orphanage. Another suggested leaving her on the trail for someone to find. Running Wolf and Hawk were the only ones who could speak English, so they carried on a conversation alone most of the night. In the end, Hawk brought her back to the camp to Little Bird. The little girl had a glassy look in her eyes and never spoke a word all the way home. She only ate what Hawk fed her by hand and drank when he offered his canteen.

Running Wolf and Hawk thought the renegades were out to kidnap the little girl, and the Cheyenne hunters were either witnesses and needed to be disposed of or just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This was a mystery, but they both knew this little girl needed to be protected until they could figure it out.



AS SOON AS Hawk walked into the teepee with the little girl in his arms, Little Bird took her gently to the furs near the fire.

Hawk and Little Bird talked about the situation. He had called for the medicine woman and went to talk to the chief. Running Wolf was the chief's only son and Hawk's blood brother and best friend. Together, they talked the chief into letting the girl stay until her family could be found, but only if they did not bring trouble for the tribe.