

## CHAPTER 14

For a Dakota bride, the major problem was not that of adjusting to her new status as wife, which was private and personal, but adjusting to her husband's family and relatives, which was a social matter. Waterlily, as the outsider, must integrate herself correctly into the *tiyošpaye* headed by her father-in-law, Good Hunter. She must make this adjustment smoothly and correctly, or her kinship training at home would be in question. Dakota kinship rules, especially where relatives of marriage were concerned, were very exact and exacting. Her first step was to learn by subtle observation who was what to her, and then she must proceed to conduct herself properly in each case, as prescribed by kinship law. But this was not too complicated, after all. Anyone with ordinary intelligence, who had been brought up within the framework of the system, understood all its intricacies. Nevertheless, a relentless watchfulness was needed, especially at first.

So, with this matter constantly on her mind, she was not very homesick. There was too much in her new life to demand her attention. Then, too, she lived on the knowledge back in her mind that her parents would be coming on a long visit. Before leaving, her husband's real mother had invited them for an indefinite stay, and they had promised to come along with the first sizable party of travelers heading south. She could wait for that. Meantime she would get fully acquainted with her many new relatives of marriage; she would watch her kinship manners toward them all, so that they would know she was well bred—that her people had taught her that most important of lessons, the one regarding her duties toward her relatives. This new responsibility to represent her people kept her very quiet and observant, and she preferred to be a little inconspicuous at all times. That was safer than to be too enthusiastic and perhaps say or do the wrong things.

For the first time she understood what made her uncle, the husband of Dream Woman and father of Leaping Fawn and Prairie Flower, such a reticent man in their midst. Always he seemed to hold back a little, though he was agreeable and alert to be helpful, and though everyone liked him. It was because he was an outsider. In the *tiyošpaye* of Black Eagle, all were his relatives of marriage. He was like a perpetual visitor. He could never quite relax as he might have at home. Right now Waterlily found herself having to act like that uncle.

This *tiyošpaye* was the largest she had ever known. Good Hunter had a tremendous following of his own relatives, and his wives had theirs, too, though not so large. Together, they added up to a goodly number of people. It would not be easy to place so many individuals correctly. But once acquainted, she would see where she fitted into the whole group, and then she would be more at ease—she hoped.

No doubt it was to help a bride among her husband's people, or a groom among his wife's, that newlyweds regularly were left by themselves, until the one from outside got his or her bearings. At any rate, Waterlily found it a very helpful custom. The relatives did not make demands on her, or make her conspicuous and uncomfortable by focusing special attention on her or obliging her to talk, unless she wished. The delicacy of her husband's people in this respect comforted her.

Gradually, from each person's behavior toward her she inferred their relationship to her. For

instance, on the first morning after her arrival, when she went outside to adjust the windflaps of her tipi to the prevailing wind, she heard giggling and whispering calculated for her ears. “Hey! Watch out, there! That’s a rope across the path. Don’t trip over that log! Look out for the post!”

She pretended not to hear, but from the corner of her eye she could see three boys in their middle teens watching her and grinning good-naturedly. Lying in the next tipi, whose bottom was rolled up all around and propped for ventilation, they were having fun trying to rattle her. Nobody needed to tell her who they were. They were either brothers or cousins of her husband, which put them in a joking relationship to her. What they were doing would be extremely rude for others, but it was their privilege to plague a brother’s or a cousin’s wife in that way, giving her a chance to reciprocate in kind if she liked. A bit of good-natured rudeness was allowable between them. The boys were implying: Too bad! Our brother (or cousin) has married a late sleeper (an indolent person) who walks about not yet fully awake. We must warn her.

They hoped Waterlily would joke back when she knew who they were. This was their preliminary skirmish, to introduce themselves and to find out whether she was the type to enjoy the joking privilege. It was all in fun—to get a rise out of her, if possible.

Waterlily found another brother-in-law one warm evening. As she sat leaning against her tipi on the shady side in late afternoon, a toddler of two came toward her. He had a present for her, a bit of leaf. In offering it, he lost his balance and tumbled in front of her. Waterlily caught him and sat him down on her lap. Thereupon one of her mothers-in-law, who was cooking at the outdoor fire and till then had seemed not to see her there, called out to the child, “That’s right! Embrace her and make love to her. When you are big, perhaps she will leave Sacred Horse and elope with you. She is far too beautiful for him, anyway!” So Waterlily learned that it was a little brother-in-law that she held on her lap.

Thus went the business of getting the numerous relatives placed. Before the next moon she had a fair notion of her duties toward them all. Aside from those in joking relationship to her, all the others were formal relatives. Her father-in-law and his three wives were expected to be scrupulously formal, for they were avoidance relatives. They must be distantly helpful and respectful, and their respect must consist in not getting in her way or demanding her attention on them. Her reciprocal role was the same.

In spite of this rule, the eldest mother-in-law, Taluta, the senior wife, who was Sacred Horse’s real mother, occasionally overstepped by talking directly and in a chummy way to Waterlily. This surprised the girl, for she had never before met a woman so independent of the avoidance taboo. And indeed some friends of the mother-in-law openly criticized her for it. “But it is too much liberty that you take, the way you talk so freely with your son’s wife.” To which she replied, “What of it? I can’t let that rule stop me. She is only a child, after all, and far from her own people because we carried her off. She must be homesick at times. If I can cheer her up, what is so bad in that?”

So the two sat together often, talking of pleasantly trivial matters, the elder woman doing most of the talking and seeming more like a mother than a mother-in-law. This went on until Waterlily was emboldened in due time to talk more freely. One day she expressed her interest

in the size of Good Hunter's tipi. He needed one extraordinarily large, to shelter his three families, though by now the two children of the senior wife, Echo and her brother Sacred Horse, were married and had their own lodges close by.

"Yes, it is large," her mother-in-law told Waterlily. "Thirty-six of the very largest bullhides went into this tent. And it took a good while to cut and piece it together. Women came to help and we held feasts every day for them. Your father-in-law selected the poles from the Black Hills, and his sons and nephews cut and brought them in. His old uncle, who understands such work, spent many days in removing the bark and shaving the wood down to make the poles smooth and of the right shape. They had to lie unused a long time before they were weathered enough."

Waterlily volunteered, "Our tipi had nineteen poles. My uncle's had twenty-three. His was bigger than ours because he always had a great deal of company, being head of our *tiyošpaye*."

The mother-in-law, Taluta, went on to say that the tipis of Good Hunter all required thirty-four poles, excluding the two outside that controlled the windflaps, and that it took men to raise the poles and hoist the tent; women alone could not erect a tipi this size.

From the first Waterlily had been struck by the way it was laced up the center back with wooden pins, as well as up the front above the entryway. Now she understood why the heavy tent came in two pieces, each half raised separately. It would break one hoisting pole if it were whole. The interior was very spacious, for a tipi. Once when it stood vacant, Waterlily paced it off and found it to be sixteen of her steps across.

Each wife had her own compartment, which she shared with her small children, while the senior wife occupied the hostess's space on the righthand side nearest the entrance. Good Hunter had his own space, and the older children had theirs. Three young sons of the second wife shared one, and six girls occupied two spaces, one of the girls being a cousin living with them. Also present were a grandparent or two. And generally an uncle and his wife, or some other couple who were close relatives, stayed there also. There were spaces for them all. Often, too, some traveler or outsider sought shelter for a night, having no other place to stop. It was Good Hunter's boast that no wayfarer was ever turned away and no visitor, even a casual caller, was allowed to leave without first eating a meal.

The honor-place, with a decorated curtain across the entire rear, was kept in order, and fancy bags and things were placed there, enhancing the background against which special guests sat to be entertained. Everyone kept to his own place, and there was a certain dignity and quiet order in the tipi, even though so many lived in it much of the time.

All the wives—two being sisters and one their cousin—were equally responsible for the cooking. Whoever of them was not working at some task that had to be finished started the next meal, as a matter of course. Likewise, all the women were equally responsible for all the children, being mothers to them all. Indeed, until an outsider was well acquainted, he could not tell which woman was the real mother of any child, except the nursing baby.

Waterlily was, of course, familiar with the idea of plural wives, though there happened to be none in her uncle's *tiyošpaye* back home. This was her first opportunity to know such a case intimately and she found it a harmonious household. All the wives cheerfully shared the burdens of the family. They took turns in their husband's affections, and if he seemed to favor

one of them overmuch for a time, the others joked about it and let it pass.

But even though the wives were coequal in a sense, it was the senior wife, Taluta, who had precedence. As she told Waterlily with some confidence, “He bought *me*.” Later on, her younger sister had been given to him by her parents “that she might be with her elder sister, to help her and to enjoy her protection.” It was customary to do this, especially if the young unmarried girl was motherless and needed the protection and counsel of her sister. Still later, the cousin, an even younger woman, had been added to the household on the same plea.

Waterlily had known of several prominent men who had more than one wife, and that great leaders, medicine men, hunters, and such influential men could afford to provide for more than one wife and one family at the same time. She had heard, too, of a holy man among the Santees in the far east who had nine wives! Her father, Rainbow, had been there and seen them; otherwise Waterlily would have thought it was only a myth. Well, here was her father-in-law with three wives, three families in one, and everything ran smoothly. She said so, as politely as she knew how.

The senior wife laughed. “If you had come two years earlier, you might have had four mothers-in-law,” she said, explaining that the fourth, a complete outsider, was such a troublemaker that Good Hunter had sent her back to her family in a distant band.

Taluta, the senior wife, the bought wife, was so sure of her position that she was a bit dictatorial at times, if it seemed necessary. But she was kind, and mothered everyone in the family in her crisp way: A big person at heart as well as in body, she concerned herself impartially over the welfare of her husband, the two co-wives, and their several children, as well as her own. Never petty, she was a just and good manager of their household economy.

When it came time to give a wedding feast for Waterlily and Sacred Horse, she was in full command and made it one of the best and most generous occasions that camp circle had known. “Come and take my daughter-in-law’s hand,” she invited special ones, and when they shook hands with the girl in greeting, she gave them fine presents, honoring Waterlily.

A day came when Good Hunter decided to make a cache and store away their surplus food against the leaner days that never failed to come, sooner or later. Then it was that the senior wife showed her full capacity to organize and direct the entire family in the work. Waterlily was much impressed by her executive powers—what must be done was so clear in the woman’s mind.

It was partly from fear that Good Hunter wanted to hide much food away somewhere at this time. Unlike Waterlily’s own camp circle, so remote and complacent, these people were worried. There was incessant talk about the white men and what their presence would do to the food supply. “They are coming in greater and greater numbers all the time, and they threaten our herds. They wantonly kill off our friends (the buffalo) and leave them spoiling on the plains. What manner of men are they, to be so wasteful? Are they children? Do they not yet have their senses? If this keeps on, we shall all starve!” So talked the men, some saying one thing, some another, but all of it adding up to that, and more. To those of lesser vision, it seemed impossible that all the vast herds roaming the plains would be killed off, or that there could be men capable of slaughtering the noble creatures just for a pastime. Yet that was the fear that haunted the camp council.

Good Hunter, who expected the worst, called his *tiyospaye* together. “My relatives,” he told them, “this that we hear all around is a bad thing. But a wise man defends—or tries to defend—himself. If he fails, he has at least tried. Now, therefore, I am planning to make a cache in the ancient manner and store away all the meat I can bring together. I advise you to join me. Bring other foods, too, such as fruits of the earth, and store them away. Then at least for a time we shall eat, ere we die.”

He turned to the women, including his wives and his daughters-in-law (all the women sat grouped together at this conference, as at all public meetings), and continued: “Each man will get in all the food he can. His wife will prepare every bit that is over and above her daily needs, cutting the meat as thin as possible for drying and treading. When it is ready, she will pack it well into as many cases as need be. We shall have room in the cache for every family to store its food. The cases will be laid in storage according to each woman’s own things, plainly indicated by the designs on her containers. Some day, when food is low, she will have it to feed her family and to offer to visitors in courtesy.”

Immediately the hunters went out to bring in all the meat possible, and the women worked till sundown every night, cutting it into the proper shape. Certain of the elderly men, who knew the art, meantime went out to an isolated spot under the pines, far from the camp circle, to get the cache ready. They dug a round hole straight down to the length of a tall man’s arm and wide enough in diameter to admit a man. From that depth they began to widen it as they worked down. They pulled up the loose dirt in bullhides as the diggers sent it up. Those on top carried the loads on their backs and dumped the dirt in the tall underbrush, so that no one could see it and speculate on the possibility of a storage cave nearby. When finished, the cache was a clean, roomy chamber far underground, its shape resembling an immense jar set into the earth.

The women worked fast, preparing the meat for processing. After it was cut into sheets, it was hung on horizontal poles to dry for a day or so in the sun and wind. Then it was ready for treading. A carpet of fresh leaves was spread on the grass, on which the sheets of meat were laid flat. More leaves were put over the meat, and finally a clean hide was thrown over the whole. Then the treading began.

Some lively boys around fifteen or sixteen years of age were put through the sweatbath and were given new moccasins to wear. From then on, all day long, they stamped and beat down the meat under the hide. Sometimes they worked together, stepping in strict time; sometimes they took turns, one or another pausing to eat and to rest. But always the treading must be vigorous and continuous; and if momentarily the boys seemed to slow down, old grandfathers, now helpless in all else but their tongues, sat by, singing their praises to keep them going, or cajoling, and finally ridiculing them good-naturedly.

“*Ecaaa!*” they pretended to sneer, “Why, when we were boys, treading meat ...” and they boasted of their boundless energy at that time. “When I was your age ... Alas, where is the stamina of youth today?” And the boys, trying to vindicate their generation, strove all the harder in their efforts to disprove the charge that boys weren’t what boys used to be. When it was deemed enough, the treaders were not sorry. It had been hard work in the hot sun.

Daily this was repeated, each woman entering what meat she had ready. The purpose of treading was twofold: it flattened out such kinks as the meat was drying into, and it pressed out

whatever moisture still remained after the meat was exposed outside. After the treading, the meat was hung up again, to dry through and through. Day after day it was kept hanging out till sunset.

This treading and drying was done with each new quantity until the senior wife pronounced it thoroughly conditioned for underground storage. By then it had been blanched to a grayish shade from the dark color it was when it underwent treading. The countless steps pressing upon the meat had so completely broken up the fibers that now it was soft and pliable, as ordinary jerked meat was not. With such tenderizing, the meat would “eat better” when it was cooked. The whole enterprise was an exacting task, with benefits far in the future.

Each woman packed away her own meat in *parfleches*, flat envelope containers of rawhide. When the four sides were folded and tied up, the container was oblong in shape, possibly as long as a woman’s arm and half as wide as the length. The sides were painted with bright colors in fragments of a bold, distinctive design which, when the case was folded, came together into one complete and harmonious pattern. Such containers for dried meat came in pairs exactly alike and were kept tied together. If a woman had more than one pair, they were all painted the same. The purpose was for identification, like a brand. When meat was cached, any woman could find hers by her own design. The pairs were tied loosely together so that it was possible to open one of the cases without the other’s getting in the way. When carried on a packhorse, one hung on either side of its body.

To store the packs of food, one man let himself down into the cache by means of a pole. Standing in the center of it, he received from the men above him the pairs of cases belonging to each family, in turn, and laid them around close to the wall. He continued in a spiral, leaving room between the cases so that if one family was compelled to open the cache before the others, they could pull out their own cases easily and the ones remaining would simply settle downward. When the man finished putting all the cases in place, he was helped up and out.

The sod on top had been lifted out intact in large pieces. After bracing the opening underneath as seemed sufficient, the men replaced that sod, mending the sutures with dirt and sprinkling grass and leaves and pebbles so that a passerby would have great difficulty realizing what it was if he should happen onto that very spot, so out of the way—though it might happen. They took that chance.

Throughout this work, the women kept together and apart from the men. Waterlily saw her husband from a distance during the day and they might speak in passing or converse if they had to work at something together. But it was customary for men and women to keep with their own kind in public. The married did not demand one another’s exclusive attention. Always aware of the presence of other people, they adjusted to them also. Waterlily asked for no more attention from her husband than did other women from theirs, nor would she have wanted it publicly; rather, it would have embarrassed her.

Only within their own tipi did they come together; there they ate and slept. But they did not talk freely together even there. Waterlily was quiet unless her husband spoke to her. He sometimes worried—perhaps it was wrong to have bought her. Perhaps her heart was not in this marriage ...

But she shared his life in all ways without demur. She was an industrious homemaker and

her little tipi, which her mothers-in-law had standing ready for her when she arrived, was always as neat as could be. It was pretty, too—of white skins, well proportioned, and therefore firm of stance. When the shape was right, a tipi stood firm, pulled groundward evenly. Otherwise it was never entirely wind and storm proof. The bridal tipi was decorated with fancy tassels and other ornaments on the sides, and it was clean and bright inside. Waterlily dreaded winter, when it would be necessary to build an indoor fire whose rising smoke must in time darken the upper half. As yet it gleamed in the sun and she was proud of it. Most of the time so far it had not been necessary for her to build even an outdoor fire for cooking. A while before mealtime came around, if she was still at work on something, food would be standing inside, ready cooked, for her to serve her husband and herself. The many relatives of marriage saw to that, vieing with one another to show her every courtesy. It was well that they did so, for Waterlily was tired after a day of heavy work.

That was the pleasant penalty of having an exceptionally skillful hunter for a husband. The work of caring for the meat and treating the skins seemed endless. But she did not think to neglect any of it. Her mother had talked to her often about industry, and she had heard the derisive comments of other women about lazy wives. Because she, Waterlily, went at her home tasks so systematically, her husband's people praised her to their friends. "My daughter-in-law is indeed a fine woman—a good worker and with much skill in womanly crafts. She made this for me," and the senior wife of Good Hunter exhibited a foot neatly encased in a moccasin of much embellishment, the work of Waterlily. But this took place only where Waterlily did not hear or see her.

In her presence, little of her work or industry was alluded to, except to complain to her that she was overdoing and ought to rest. It was their subtle way of praising her—by not showing surprise or too obvious gratification, as if she were more of a success than they had hoped. That would be like saying they had not thought her *tiyošpaye* could turn out such a fine girl.

Busy and well treated, Waterlily was getting nicely acclimated to her new environment. And then, suddenly, she grew homesick. It all started one day when, coming round a tipi, she saw that her father-in-law was placidly dressing his wives' hair, in turn. He was sitting at right angles to the middle wife and had first unbraided the hair on that side, combed it all out gently, oiled it till it shone, and was now braiding it again. All his wives had very long hair. He was proud of that, because it was a mark of good looks. And as he worked, he chatted pleasantly with the wife.

This was a semi-intimate scene indicating the best of relations between the married. Waterlily instantly recalled that Rainbow used to dress Blue Bird's hair just like that. It seemed very long ago and remote, that childhood life of hers when they had sat so. It was a mark of tender affection and the only bit of demonstrativeness between husband and wife that any outsider was permitted to see, for such things as kissing or embracing, even in fun, were definitely not done in public.

Only once in a while a man might indulge himself by performing this simple office for his wife. It was always done calmly and casually, but it was not routine. No affectionate act was ever demanded or taken for granted. A wife did not pout when her husband neglected to dress her hair or pay her any other such attention, and a man was sometimes too busy or preoccupied

to enjoy it. Such marks of fondness were not meant to be done like a daily chore. There would be no satisfaction in that for either man or wife.

Waterlily, watching at a distance, felt a sharp yearning for her own parents. In place of her father-in-law she seemed to see Rainbow talking quietly about matter-of-fact things to Blue Bird, all the time working carefully with her hair, enjoying the feel of the long strands through his fingers. The thought struck her, "Will my husband ever do my hair?" She knew that some men never dressed a wife's hair, being temperamentally not so inclined, though they might think highly of her.

She was sure she would not want him to—not until they were very old, maybe. But now he would be crazy if he attempted it, and she would feel silly enough to die! Newlyweds did not indulge in any such domestic display. They were properly reserved with reference both to each other and to whoever might see them.

Waterlily did not want her own hair dressed—but how that scene yonder filled her with longing for her home! It was now the third moon since she had come here to live, and still there was no sign of her family. She was impatient to see them, and at the same time worried lest they strike out by themselves over the wild stretch of no man's land between their camp circle and this. What if they had started alone and their tipi was raided on the way and—oh no! She dared not let her imagination run on. She knew what raids were and what they could do. Her mother had lost her parents that way, and she herself was once in a party that barely escaped one, only because of Rainbow's alertness—the time her brother Little Chief struck first coup.

And then, when her hidden concern over her people was at its peak, travelers brought word that Rainbow had had to postpone his visit because his aged father was ailing and likely to die soon. Waterlily realized how Rainbow must feel. She loved her grandfather dearly, too. How she longed to be there herself, now that he was so ill. If he were to die, with her so far away, she thought she could not bear it. Her tears began dropping on the fancywork she was doing.

"Don't cry, sister," the wife of her husband's cousin who sat with her said. (The wives of brothers or cousins were sisters in social kinship.) "Don't cry. You are saddened by news of your grandfather, I know. But as my father always said, tears are for shedding only over the dead. He was right—what else is worth crying about? Only death, because it is forever. But your grandfather is only sick; he may recover. So be happy, sister. No one has died."

She went on again, after a little, "Or perhaps you have felt some forewarning to make you anxious, something that un-steadies your spirit, such as a twitching on your face, below your eyes and down your cheeks, where tears are to flow? Or is your body all alive and expectant, as if invisible hands were about to touch you—something like that? Or perhaps you have heard a ringing in your ear?"

Waterlily recalled that on the previous evening, when she stood alone with her left ear turned in the direction of her home, there had been a loud ring as if from far away. It had come directly at her and seemed to penetrate her being.

"There! That's *it!* That's the disturbing news you have just received." The sister was delighted with her own diagnosis. "But don't you see," she said, "your lips haven't quickened where your mother has kissed you, your arms have not felt oversensitive where you have held your little brother and sister, nor your shoulders where other relatives have embraced you.



Why, even your eyes are free of crying signs. See there?" the sister had fully convinced herself. Then she tried in her clumsy way to rationalize. "But even though your grandfather should die, it will be best for him. You say he is old and blind and alone. Don't you know, people like that yearn to die. So do not feel so bad ... anyway, we all must die ..."

But that day was the turning point. Before that, Waterlily had been absorbed with the problem of getting acquainted with the very large company of new relatives. Now, having succeeded, she was still not happy, even though they were all friendly and respectful. Something was definitely wrong. Nor was it because of Sacred Horse. Though she still felt they did not know each other well, he was very kind and gentle with her, and a good provider. She had much that many a girl would wish for. What ailed her, anyway?

Suddenly she had the answer. It was that she lacked home-people, relatives of birth. Everyone here was a relative of marriage. They were *his* home-people; *he* was free to be himself in their presence in a way that she was not. This was to be expected, of course. All her life she had seen avoidance respect and thought it entirely proper. But being so recently placed in this new situation where she must live in its formal atmosphere exclusively, she found the strain becoming too hard for one so young and so far from home.

She needed family relatives such as Sacred Horse was enjoying in his own *tiyošpaye*. She needed an environment charged with parental affection, where she could indulge her moods and could be herself without constraint. Parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents humored you, even spoiled you a little. Before them you could be outspoken, impudent, and perhaps say or do silly things, with the assurance that they would understand. Waterlily needed her menfolk, too, her brothers and cousins ready at all times to protect her and give her social backing. Without them, a woman felt insecure against—she did not know what. But she felt as if here she stood vulnerable and alone.

The environment of the family of marriage obligated one to play an adult, responsible role at all times without slack. The kinship laws so ordered it. Life in the *tiyošpaye* of Sacred Horse was, for Waterlily, like wearing ceremonial dress all the time, and how she longed for homely, easy clothes in which to drop her dignity now and then!

Few persons were individualist enough to kick over the kinship traces as the senior wife did to make her son's young wife feel at home. Waterlily was grateful to her for that. But it was not enough. She dared not break rules, too, and behave like a careless child toward her husband's mother. However informal the older woman was, her son's wife was still her daughter-*in-law*. "If only I had one person in this camp circle that was a family relative, so I could relax in her presence just once! Among all these people," Waterlily sighed, "everyone is an in-law to me."

As if in answer, unbelievable as it seemed to her, a man and his wife came one day to visit Waterlily, calling her "daughter." The woman embraced her with motherly tenderness. "My daughter," she explained, "we learned only last night, on our return home, who it was that has become the wife of Sacred Horse. You are in good hands, daughter, for this is an able and upright family where you will always be treated well. And indeed they should be proud of you. I am sure they are." The woman had brought Waterlily courtesy food and gifts. "Your brother Red Leaf it was who told us about you," she said.

Red Leaf? My brother? Waterlily tried to think where she had heard that name. All at once it

came back to her. Why, Red Leaf was the little boy with whom her brother Ohiya played during a tribal reunion some years ago, before the trip to Palani's camp circle. She remembered how the two boys took an instant liking to each other and how Ohiya in his eager fashion had made a friendship pact with his playmate. How he had come in breathless and solemn to announce to the family, "We have gone into fellowship." Blue Bird and Rainbow had accepted the news a little doubtfully, reminding Ohiya that such a friendship was for grown men who understood the heavy obligations and were prepared to face them always. "Maybe when you are men you will not be sure that is what you want," Blue Bird said gently. But that did not deter Ohiya, his sister recalled, smiling. Such a little thing—children imitating adults. And yet here it was working out to her advantage, for here were people she could call father and mother.

Waterlily remembered that Rainbow had said to Blue Bird, "It seems like playing with a sacred matter, doesn't it?" But Red Leaf's parents had taken the matter seriously and approved it so much that there had been an exchange of presents. And then the two fellows were separated and were seemingly destined never to meet again, at least as playmates.

"Daughter"—the woman did all the talking, or nearly all—"we would have claimed you sooner but we have been in the Black Hills where your father has a white man friend. 'Lean White Man' he calls him, and a good name it is, too. For he is very thin and long and weak-looking. But so active! The way he can work would surprise you. Whenever he goes far away, toward the sunrise, we camp near his cabin to guard it for him. And when he returns he brings us very fine presents, like these dishes of metal I have brought you."

Waterlily could hardly believe that a Dakota and a white man could be friends. "And this white man, my mother," she said, "are you sure he is really good, in his heart, toward my father? How may my father know, since he cannot understand his language?"

"Oh, but your father does," the woman was very complacent. "Say something for her."

"Well," and he cleared his throat in preparation, "well, he calls me 'injun'—that means Dakota in his language. I say, 'Got tobacco?' when I want a smoke. It isn't hard. And too, my friend talks some Dakota, so we get along. Oh, he is my friend, all right!"

The wife cut in, "He gave your father many fine things to bring home. I have for you a piece of red blanket [flannel], too. He gave him knives and spoons, and blue as well as red cloth, and even a holy-iron [gun] to shoot with."

When the new-found parents of Waterlily prepared to leave, after eating the good meal she had served them, the woman said, "Daughter, we live exactly opposite—across the common. Return home whenever you feel like it and spend the day with your own relatives." She indicated the direction with a quick upward thrust of her chin, her hands being full of return gifts from Waterlily. "Do you see the tallest tipi, the one with its upper half painted blue? Well, that's not it. But the second one on the left, the next tallest, that's it." It was the habit of the people to eliminate other, similar objects until they isolated the one they wished to point out: not that, nor that, nor that yonder—but the other.

The father added his invitation. "Come soon and often, my daughter. You have mothers and aunts who will prepare foods you like. You have fathers and uncles, and brothers, sisters, and cousins—and you have especially your own little brother Red Leaf. You have sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews—and many grandparents. They are all eager for a sight of you."

When they had walked off a few paces, the woman turned and said, “Why, I nearly forgot! You even have a grandchild now. Your eldest sister’s son became the father of a baby girl only yesterday, so come and see your granddaughter!”

They cut across the common, walking one behind the other, with the man leading. Watching them go, Waterlily felt relief. From now on things were going to be easier. Here were people with whom she could be herself, without stopping to consider her dignity. Kinship came in halves—the family of birth and the family of marriage. In the one, a person was permitted to play the child occasionally; in the other, he must strictly play the adult, as a matter of self-respect, once having accepted an adult role. Waterlily had been cramped, in a one-sided society; now, with its complement, she was going to manage all right. It was best to have many contacts; having both kinds of relatives kept life in balance.

The fact that these new parents were nothing like her own father and mother made no difference. They were older and not nearly so handsome as were Rainbow and Blue Bird, but she did not think to draw comparisons. It was what they symbolized, what they offered Waterlily, that mattered. Being a respected daughter-in-law was all right. The deference continually shown her was pleasant; the challenge to reciprocate that deference as smoothly and correctly offered no problem. She had been too well trained in all the intricacies of kinship courtesy and behavior to make mistakes. But now she could cast aside that formal role occasionally and be somebody’s child, and she was glad of that. Now, if only Blue Bird and Rainbow would arrive for that long visit and renew their relationship with these kindly local parents of hers, life would be perfect, she thought.

And then she remembered what it was that was preventing their coming immediately. She thought of her poor sick old grandfather and was sad again. But not quite so sad.

## CHAPTER 15

The average Dakota woman did not indulge in confessions or confidences with other women, or in minute analyses regarding her married life. She did not share any intimate secrets of that life, or her reactions to it, whether pleasant or unpleasant. She could live and die with her own secrets, and she did so. Her one concern was to maintain her dignity. She would not make it possible for other women to ridicule her or accuse her of a lack of reticence on that point.

However agreeable or upsetting her marriage might be, she managed a calm exterior, a convincing matter-of-factness about it, that prevented others—including her husband—from guessing her feelings. If her married life was obnoxious to her, she simply walked out of it without a word as to why. If pressed, she might say, “It was not agreeable to me ... That being so ...,” and her reason was clear and sufficient. There was no economic need for her to endure in silence. She knew that her brothers and male cousins were ready to provide for her, and her own relatives to take her back into their midst. She did not have to hang on just to be supported by a husband.

Nor was there any need to flaunt her married state. Why should she, since there was no particular triumph where the premise was “man in pursuit, woman overcome.” Thus presumably she had not landed him; he had landed her. Let the man gloat, if gloating there was to be. A woman who acted important because she was married was something of a fool and incurred ridicule rather than aroused admiration or envy. Almost any woman could marry *somebody*, and marriage for women was the rule. There was no particular distinction in it that one married woman should play it up.

Back of it all was the kinship reason for a wife’s reticence. No matter with whom she exchanged confidences, whatever she told about her husband’s intimacy with her would eventually reach his women relatives, particularly his sisters and cousins, and they would bitterly resent his being publicly discussed in an undignified light. They could not forgive a stupid wife who thus made their brother or cousin appear ridiculous or worse. It was the kinship duty of these womenfolk of his to uphold his honor and to defend him in all phases of his life. And since every woman had brothers and cousins to defend, they all held the same attitude in this matter. Thus kinship once again wielded a controlling force here, in muzzling all idle talk about marital intimacy involving specific personalities.

Growing up in a milieu where these ideas and habits obtained, Waterlily could not help but reflect them in her own marriage. Nor had it been enough that she absorbed them from her surroundings unconsciously. Her mother must hammer them in, also, with perhaps too positive strokes. “When you marry, my daughter, remember that your children are more important than you. Always the new life comes first. Your duty to your children must be in accordance to this rule.

“Next, it is your duty to honor and respect your husband and to keep your life with him a secret always. A woman who talks about her relations with her husband is disloyal to her mate and a reproach to herself. Accept your new life as a mature woman, even while you are gentle and yielding. Do not behave in a childish manner toward your husband. You are his helpmeet, not his baby. Be grown up.

“Watch your actions and attitude toward your husband’s relatives. If you make crude mistakes, they will think you ignorant of kinship manners and will be sorry their son married you. Be respectful; honor them by ‘avoiding’ them. And in all your dealings with relatives of marriage hold back a little at first. Keep your reserve at all times. Be composed. Be wise.”

Waterlily had followed her mother’s advice almost without qualification. It was her privilege and duty to be bashful and prudent in adjusting to her new situation as wife and relative-in-law. That was proper for the young bride, even though it was bound to take time to feel at home with her husband and to break down her habitual silence. The husband who understood this and was willing to wait patiently, and who did not try to draw her out prematurely by tricks, was indeed a wise man. It paid him in the end.

All the same, it was beginning to dawn on Sacred Horse that his wife was being unduly slow, unduly quiet. He could not tell what she was thinking, even while her behavior was all that he could ask. Misgivings began to assail him—could it be that she was a naturally glum person? Or that she regretted her marriage to him? Did he not please her as she pleased him? Would she never snap out of it and feel fully at home with him?

Finally he went to consult his cousin, a man of more years and more experience than himself. “I am troubled, my cousin. She hardly ever speaks unless I start the conversation. She talks along well enough then, but what troubles me is that she never begins and she always stops first. She seems afraid to talk freely. Why, you’d be surprised at the mute life we live together.” Then, hopelessly, he added, “If it is always going to be so, how can we have a good life?”

In giving advice, men usually thought a while first. But at last the cousin said, “It is always harder for a newlywed couple to get used to each other within the man’s *tiyošpaye*. You made your first mistake in not staying for a while with her family, where she would have only you to adjust to. Then, when she knew you well, she would be better able to meet the problem of in-laws by itself. I say this out of my own experience. At first I stayed with my wife’s *tiyošpaye*, where I was the one to act in a bashful manner, not she. It was easy enough for me to stay out of the way, and she was still surrounded by her familiar relatives. That made it easier for us to start our life together. It did not take her long to get used to me, since I alone was a stranger.”

He made another observation. “If your wife is still reserved toward you, do not be alarmed. Consider that she was bought. A woman who hastily jumps into marriage by eloping must needs go all out to get acquainted with her husband. She can hardly affect bashfulness after her bold step. One who marries by mutual agreement needs only to meet her husband halfway. But the one who is bought—well, a man must expect to go all the way. He must do all his wooing after marriage.

“But don’t you worry, my cousin. You are still a boy and have no knowledge of woman’s nature. When there is a child, it will all work out. Shy women always find their tongue fast enough then. Just let a babe lie helpless in their arms crying for nourishment, and then, without

a thought as to who might be looking, they forget themselves, driven by their single desire to soothe it. Then they pour out a steady flow of tender words into the infant's ear—and soon they have the habit of talking. Just wait and see.”

All that Sacred Horse had told his cousin about Waterlily was true. He could count on the fingers of one hand the times so far that she had talked spontaneously and at any encouraging length. And those rare times were very precious to him. Memorable was the day he killed an antelope and brought it home already skinned. After unloading it outside the tipi, he came in, ate the food she had ready for him, and then lay down flat on his back, on the opposite side of the tipi from her.

“Ah, it is good to stretch out,” he groaned contentedly while he watched her from the corner of his eye. She only smiled a little flicker of a smile as she lowered her eyes on her work and said nothing. He tried again. “Now, if someone were to remove my damp moccasins, wipe my throbbing feet, and paint the soles of them with red ceremonial paint, that would be perfect! After a wearying day to be made a beloved in that way!”

He saw her start to smile, with a spark of interest in her eyes—and then quickly bite her lip and look down, a silent little woman in her woman's space. He had not really expected her to paint his feet—not yet. That was another custom for seasoned couples who had learned to esteem one another from a long mutual kindness through the years. It was no routine requirement for a wife, any more than dressing a wife's hair was routine for a husband. A man did not ask for his feet to be soothed and honored. It was an unsolicited and spontaneous sign of wifely affection and appreciation.

Sacred Horse knew that they were both too young in years and too new in their marriage for that. He only said it as a joke, because it would be for them such an incongruous performance. After a long interval he broke the silence. “I don't suppose you know what that is. One sees it so seldom and it is for couples much older than we.” He gave up then and rolled over toward the tipi wall for a nap. She'd never talk, he guessed.

But for once Waterlily did talk, softly reminiscing: “I do know what it is. My mother has done it. One time I especially remember, she did it after a long, hard day when hunting was very poor and everyone was anxious. We were all miserable with hunger. Both Smiling One and Ohiya were crying for food and my mother was very unhappy. But she called us in and said: ‘Children, probably your father will have to return without any meat again today. All the animals have vanished together, by agreement it seems. We may have to fill up on more mashed *tinpsila* [prairie turnips] again tonight. He will get home worn out after trying hard to find food for us. So what do you say we paint his feet and put pretty new moccasins on him?’

“We forgot our hunger and got busy. Everyone helped. Mother got the water ready while Ohiya went over the prairie, gathering fresh sage plants, the soft, fragrant kind with tender, velvety leaves, for her to wipe my father's feet dry and cool them at the same time. I took down the paint bag from the tipi pole where it always hung and opened it as carefully as I could because the paint was in powder form. I spread it out so that it would be ready to use. My little sister, Smiling One—she was only three then—sat holding the new moccasins. When it came time, she surrendered them one at a time, so very solemnly that it was funny.” Waterlily laughed indulgently, forgetting herself.

“When my father came in he staggered from loss of sleep. He was limp from fatigue. When we painted his feet, he said nothing, only he moaned a little. But we knew he was happy. And he had brought meat at last, too. He had walked to the big hills on the horizon to find it and had carried a large deer on his back all the way home! But what pleased him most was that even before we knew he was bringing food to us, we had been planning to make him our beloved by putting red paint ceremonially on him. I remember too ...” But there she stopped short. The long speech had so astonished her, suddenly, that she could not go on. It was at such times, when in a nostalgic mood, that she could forget her new status momentarily and talk freely and charmingly.

“I have to see to the meat.” So, murmuring an excuse for leaving abruptly, she slipped outside. Sacred Horse went to sleep, hopeful of some headway. He woke only when she peered in at the entrance and asked, “What have you done with the hide?”

“I left it at twin oak,” he said. “I thought you ought to rest this once from dressing hides day after day. It is too much for you. We can afford to lose one skin now and then.”

“You ought not to have done that. You ought always to bring in everything that can be of use. It is no hardship dressing hides. I am used to it. Besides, we always need good buckskin for clothing and other things.”

Her words were a rebuke. But under them also was happiness that he had contrived to spare her. All the same, she could not leave the precious hide out there. While he slept on, she bridled her pony and rode swiftly out, without speaking of her intention to anyone. When Sacred Horse got up and missed her, he hurried out to the twin oak, guessing that was where she had gone.

She had pulled down the slippery hide from the high fork (where the oak became twins) into which Sacred Horse had flung it. But she was having difficulty in holding it in place while she tied it to her pony. Green hides were always a slimy dead weight. This one kept sliding off, as fast as she had it in place. Just when she was ready to give up, her husband came to her aid.

By the time they were ready to go back it was dusk. The ride homeward was cool and pleasant. After a little while they raced their ponies. Sacred Horse held his in check at first to give her a head start so as not to leave her too far behind. He need not have done that. Soon it was not altogether easy for him to gain on her. How that girl could ride! He had had no idea. Her long, black hair, which had come unbraided during her struggles with the hide, trailed behind her in a level sweep. Her pretty young face was tilted up and she was actually laughing, free as the wind, when he came up beside her.

They slowed down and walked their ponies the rest of the way. Twilight had by then deepened into dark night, lit only by some very bright stars that seemed just beyond reach. She talked a great deal now, mostly about her home and her childhood. She always talked more easily after dark, Sacred Horse thought to himself. Then she was very nice to be with.

It was several days after this that Sacred Horse came in one afternoon and found Waterlily all ready to go someplace. Her hair was oiled to a gloss and neatly braided, and a fresh line of vermilion marked the part. Some of the red was over her face, too. She was wearing a pretty gown, one of several that her talented aunt, Dream Woman, had made for her. Outside the entrance were three kettles of food hot off the open-air fire.

“Well, what’s all this for?” Sacred Horse asked genially, sitting down outside the tipi to eat. “Are we giving a feast?”

“No,” Waterlily said, “it is only something I prepared for our mother across the circle. She is giving a feast for the new grandchild’s ear piercing tomorrow.”

“I don’t know how to get these kettles over there,” she added. “I thought you might think of some way.”

He said nothing. But after watering his horses, he brought back a strong pole of ash and ran it through the bails of the kettles. When Waterlily was ready, she grasped one end and he the other, and thus they walked along, sharing the weight evenly, the kettles hanging between them on the pole.

The mother was delighted; even though there was plenty of food already, part of which had come from their local relatives, this that Waterlily had done was so right, socially, that it made the mother very proud. In the shrill, high voice in which women exulted, she exclaimed in cries of delighted surprise, “*Hinun! Hinun! Hinun!* Do come and see what my daughter has done! She honors the grandchild to be named tomorrow!” Then she ran to the tipi a few paces off where the infant lay asleep, and looked in at the entrance, informing it for the benefit of the adults within hearing, “See what your grandmother has done for you! She brings food for your feast! Oh, you lucky baby, to have such a pretty young grandmother who cares so much for you!”

Everyone was impressed with Waterlily’s gesture. “How well she does in kinship, for one so young!” they said. “Fortunate is the man whose wife does things well!”

And indeed, Waterlily’s initiating a deed like this so early was remarkable. Yet it was the sort of thing her people did and she knew nothing else. Blue Bird, for instance, was forever carrying courtesy food to this or that one, or inviting visitors to eat at her tipi, or helping friends and kinsmen about to give a feast, by contributing food and other gifts, or comforting the bereaved with a meal and words of condolence—every act a kinship responsibility but also a social pleasure. The daughter had only done what she knew her mother would do in her place, and it was admirably right.

Waterlily had been over here often, since she first met her social parents. By happy coincidence they were already social parents of Sacred Horse, too, so that together, husband and wife, Sacred Horse and Waterlily, were son and daughter to Red Leaf’s parents. This made a very congenial group, free of restraints and of the need for formal behavior. Both Sacred Horse and Waterlily could be perfectly natural and relaxed before their social parents. It was a fortuitous situation, and not usual.

Basking in the homelike atmosphere, Waterlily was soon joking and laughing gaily when the four sat inside the tipi that evening. She even forgot that her husband, a comparative stranger yet, was present, and her usual diffidence vanished. He watched her with concealed delight. So this was her nature when she was completely at ease—how charming she was that way! Why, there were instances when she even argued with him, and once she actually flashed a bit of petulance his way, like a spoiled child. She had spirit; she was human, all right. However had she managed to keep passive and overly polite all this time? Now, if she would only forget to crawl back into her shell like a turtle, where she could not be reached, when they were away



from here again and alone together. It occurred to him then that this was the place for them to come often. This might well be the short cut to the end of her bridal shyness. Maybe, after all, he would not have to wait until there was a child, for her to lose herself ...

And so they sat that evening, content and happy, with no suspicion of the sinister threat hanging over the whole camp circle that very night, soon to fall upon it, scattering its frightened people to the four winds. They sat visiting until a casual caller, who dropped in later on, gave them a hint of the approaching horror. And even then no one recognized it.

The dog barked a warning and a man outside called, "Do you sit there?" "Yes, come in," said Red Leaf's father. (Men replied to men, women to women.) The woman of the tipi was saying, "Let me see ... oh yes, there is plenty of stew left. (Tilting her kettle to look) He never wants much, late at night—just a snack ..." while the husband was saying, "That's Yankton, the camp circle crier, you know. He is our friend. He always drops in to see us at this time." Husband and wife spoke simultaneously. Waterlily caught both remarks.

She and Sacred Horse had been sitting side by side in the honor-place. But now the men and women formed two distinct groups, according to sex. People always tended to do this unconsciously. Waterlily eased over toward the mother and Sacred Horse toward the father. Yankton joined the men on the left side of the tipi.

All the conversation was interesting, for Yankton was an entertaining talker, and in addition he had a prodigious memory for details. Having just come from the council tipi, the forum and center of all discussions and activities, he knew all the latest news.

Presently he was talking about the beautiful blankets, woven in many colored bands, which the two sons of Buffalo Boy had recently brought home from the Arapaho country. They were much in demand as wraps and were especially adaptable for summer because they were lighter in weight than skin robes. These that the boys had brought home were the talk of the whole camp and every woman thought covetously of them.

Yankton explained that Arapaho scouts had found them in great bundles where they had been dropped by an army passing over the territory southwest of them. "When the blankets were brought into the Arapaho camp, there was a mad scramble for them, you may be sure," Yankton said, "And no wonder, for they are very fine."

"How many did Buffalo Boy's sons bring back?" Red Leaf's mother asked.

"Twenty-odd, I imagine. 'We could have got even more,' the boys said, 'but a bad sickness was raging and men, women, and children were dying fast all around. We did not want to die there, so we hurried away.'"

"And they were right," the father commented quietly. "Home is the place to die—unless it be the battlefield."

The two women shuddered, uttering the woman's expletive of fear and horror, "Yaaa!" And then the mother asked, "What kind of sickness? Did they say?"

"Yes, they said it was many-sores [smallpox]. Something like the sickness that killed off whole families over a generation ago, in some camp circles."

The mother shuddered again, "Yaaa! It does seem that there are coming to be worse and worse sicknesses in the land. Time was when such things were unknown."

But, womanlike, her mind was really on the blankets all the while. She said, “How I wish my grandchild might be wrapped in one of those new robes at her ear-piercing rites! Just long enough, during the feast, when the naming takes place. Then I should want the baby to give the blanket away to the old man who pierces her ears. It would be a worthy gift for her first giveaway. I have wanted her ears pierced,” she mused. “‘My grandchildren shall all wear ear ornaments, as children-beloved,’ I have often said aloud. ‘None shall go through life with slippery-smooth ear lobes, like a stray, without relatives to honor him.’”

Waterlily asked, “But is the old man really going to cut a hole in the baby’s ear? Poor little thing, to be shedding blood and crying from the pain. I could not bear it for her to cry, even though it means an honor.”

The father commented, “My daughter is right. I could not bear it either. Bloodshed is bad enough for adults, even when they cause it for themselves. No, the child will not actually be pierced. She will not have to cry. The ear piercer will simply hold the blade to her ear lobes in token. Later, when she is a little bigger, we shall keep clamping tighter and tighter about them some of that soft metal that my friend Lean White Man gave me before I left.” He meant lead. A band of lead with sharpened ends was used to force a hole for earrings in that manner.

At the mention of the white man, Waterlily remarked in a low voice intended only for her mother, “I have seen only a very few white men in all my life. Where I lived there were none. The few I saw were when we visited in the camp circle of my father’s fellowhood friend Palani. Oh, how their cold blue eyes frightened me!”

The father overheard her. “Daughter, you cannot tell about white men, any more than you can tell about Dakotas. Singly, here and there, white men are very good. Take Lean White Man, now. There’s a friend for you! I have none better, no, not even among the Dakotas—and that’s a strong statement, since they are my relatives.”

His wife cut in, taunting him, “I suppose you and he are in fellowhood! I suppose you would die to save him—would he die to save you?” But to this he turned a deaf ear. Elderly couples often bandied words in this vein, neither taking the other seriously. Yet the habit had its uses, too, in that it tended to help them keep each other in check. If the husband was going to far, his wife cut in and set him right, and vice versa. Everyone understood this habit of the long-time married and often found it amusing.

Over such trifles they all sat talking pleasantly, until someone spoke of the murder that had taken place the day before. Dakotas killing one another was a peculiarly dreadful thing. When one did so, it threw the entire camp circle into a state of horror and apprehension.

The reason for the recent killing was understandable in a way, yet nobody could say it was a worthy one. The village harlot, nicknamed “Everywhere,” had promised faithfully to marry two different men, Red Lake and Cedar. When she finally married Red Lake, Cedar was so angry that he swore to get them both. But he had killed only the husband; the woman was still in hiding somewhere. “And so, having killed his rival, he then swore to kill Everywhere, too,” Yankton was saying.

“I hope he finds her soon!” the woman of the tipi murmured viciously. “It is her kind that bring trouble to good men and women and set a wrong example for our girls.” Waterlily was thinking of Night Walker, a comparable character back home, who was the object of derision

and the despair of women.

“Well, so Red Lake is dead, and all because of a brazen woman,” the father remarked. To this Yankton asked in surprise, “Why, my friend, have you not heard the rest? Cedar too is now dead. A cousin of Red Lake has slain him in reprisal. It happened late today. I supposed everyone knew by now.”

“That is even worse,” the father said. “Ah, well, at least it is all over. The score has been quickly evened up. Cedar had it coming for killing a man. Whatever the provocation, it is never great enough to justify a Dakota’s taking the life of a fellow Dakota. Since he cannot return what he has taken, he can only exchange his own for it. And that Cedar has now done.”

Yankton agreed. “Indeed so. It is now cleared, as they have decided at the council tipi.”

Nobody spoke for a while, too amazed at the enormity of the thing to comment further. And then the man of the tipi sighed a long, deep sigh and began filling his pipe with the tobacco and kinnikinnick blend, dexterously from habit, without watching what he was doing. Only his hands were concerned; his mind was on far-off things. Looking straight ahead, he soliloquized thus: “So it is all settled and done with. Let it be; it is enough. Now two lives have been destroyed, the one for the other. Let us forget the nasty business and try again. It ought never to happen among men of the universal kinship of humans. Let us have peace once more.”

Sometime during the evening the boy Red Leaf had returned, entering unobtrusively, and had settled down back of his understanding mother. And she, seemingly unaware of his arrival, had nevertheless slipped some food before him, and then let him be. There, comfortable in the protecting shadow that she cast, he ate quietly. Mothers had a way with their adolescent boys that was just right. They never drew attention to them or embarrassed them in any way. When Red Leaf had finished, he had maneuvered himself toward the men’s group and was listening there back of his father.

At last he spoke up: “Yes, but will it end there?” A puzzled look was on his face. “What if now a cousin of Cedar were to kill the cousin of Red Lake? And what if a kinsman of the cousin of Red Lake were to kill the cousin of Cedar—what I mean is, since everyone has kinsmen to avenge them, they could continue killing each other, back and forth, until everyone was dead.”

“Oh, son! What dreadful things to say!” His mother pretended to be greatly horrified.

“But there is some truth in what the boy says,” Yankton spoke up. “Of course it likely would never get entirely out of hand. Fortunately, there are always bound to be mild-tempered men, poor haters, who can never get angry enough to kill. We could rely on them to stop it at some point. But a chain of killings, at least for a time, is not impossible. No doubt it was to prevent such a thing that our forefathers devised the ordeals for trying murderers, in ancient times. Thereby they put the matter up to the Great Spirit for judgment. And since humans may not dispute the *Wakan* [Holy], the result of the ordeal was accepted as final.”

The two men recalled the kinds of ordeals, one in which the guilty man was called on to ride a wild horse without falling off, and one in which he had to jump high hurdles without knocking them down. Either form was used, at the magistrates’ discretion. It was not a trial to determine if the man was actually guilty; that was already admitted and generally known. Rather it was a

judgment on him. If he was intended to die, he failed in the ordeal; if he was meant to live, he miraculously survived it.

“My friend, there is still that other way to deal with a murderer, which, to my mind, is the noblest of all because it brings the best results,” Yankton remarked. “I wonder if you are familiar with the kinship appeal.”

“Yes, my friend, I am. Though I have never witnessed it, I have heard those who have, speak of it with high respect,” the father answered. “But tell the children here. I think our people have never devised anything loftier than that.”

So Yankton described how he once saw the kinship appeal used to settle a score. The enraged young relatives of the slain man debated the kind of punishment they ought to mete out to the slayer, who was still at large. As they debated, their eldest relative, a man of great influence in the entire tribe, sat listening as though in accord with them. After they had all talked themselves out, he began to speak. With consummate skill he gave them the impression that he was going along with them all the way.

“My kindred—cousins, brothers, sons, and nephews all—today we have been made to weep without shame, men though we are. Someone has dared to do us an injury in slaying our young relative. Has he not thereby grossly insulted our family pride and our honor? Our kinsman was young; he too loved life. He was not ready to die—yet he is dead. Should we not vow that his slayer too shall die? And should we not go out forthwith and kill him? Very well, then, why do we sit talking here? Why not give the murderer his due at once?”

He smoked quietly after this, calm and steady. In due time he resumed speaking. But now he had changed his tack. “And yet (he repeated it), and yet, my kindred, there is a better way. That the fire of hate may not burn on in his heart or in ours, we shall take that better way. Go now to your homes. Look over your possessions and bring here the thing you most prize—a horse, say, or weapons, or wearing apparel, or a blanket. Easy ways and empty words may do for others. We are men of another make, so let us take the harder way, the better way. If but few are able to do that, then let us be of that few.

“The gifts you bring shall go to the murderer, for a token of our sincerity and our purpose. Though he has hurt us, we shall make him something to us [a relative], in place of the one who is not here. Was the dead your brother? Then this man shall be your brother. Or your uncle? Or your cousin? As for me, the dead was my nephew. Therefore his slayer shall be my nephew. And from now on he shall be one of us. We shall regard him as though he were our dead kinsman returned to us.”

Yankton and his host smoked a while. Then he said, “My friend, that was a tremendous proposal, would you not say?”

“Indeed it was,” his host agreed. “And what assurance of leadership that elder kinsman must have had, to dare suggest such a thing. For it required of each man to undergo inner battle with himself and to master his pride and anger first. That is not easy. I take it they all did so?”

“Yes, they accepted what their elder kinsman said, because they saw that it was right. They saw it was easy enough to fight violence with violence. Killing was the work of a moment. But to take the murderer as a relative, after what he had done, and to live in sincerity and creative

goodwill with him, day in and day out to the end of life—that was something else. You may well imagine how proud must have been the spirit of the slain youth, to see his relatives doing the harder thing!

“Now, on the appointed day, the slayer was brought to the council tipi. He was brave. He did not try to run away. He knew he had killed a man and was ready to pay with his life. Even so, not knowing his exact fate, he entered with his eyes averted, steeling himself for the worst. He did not try to infer the decision from the councilmen’s faces. He did not want them to pity him. He would not have men say, supposing him to be afraid, ‘Poor fellow! Like some hunted animal, he tried to detect mercy in men’s eyes.’

“The spokesman said, offering him the pipe of peace, ‘Smoke, with these your new kinsmen seated here. For they have chosen to take you to themselves in place of one who is not here.’ Hearing these words, the man was visibly unnerved and he began to tremble. ‘It is their desire that henceforth you shall go in and out among them without fear. By these presents which they have brought here for you, they would have you know that whatever love and compassion they had for him is now yours, forever.’ As he said these words, tears began to course down the slayer’s cheeks. You see, he had been neatly trapped by loving kinship. And you may be sure that he proved himself an even better kinsman than many who had right of birth, because the price of his redemption had come so high.”

Then Yankton added, “I know this well. I was one of the youngest and most enraged cousins of the slain man. But I learned then that there is no more powerful agent for ensuring goodwill and smothering the flame of hate than the kinship of humans.”

Waterlily and Sacred Horse and the rest sat very still after this. It was too tremendous; there were no words for it. The men smoked mechanically on, in silence, and the women sat with lowered heads, waiting for someone else to speak first. Finally and in a most everyday manner that broke the spell, the woman of the tipi threw some light sticks on the fire and when it flared up she once more tilted her black three-legged pot to the light and peered in. “Let me see ... Yes, there is some food remaining. I’ll just heat it up quickly. These chilly autumn evenings it is good to swallow something hot before going to bed.” And as she busied herself in a practical way, everyone shifted a little and came back to the present.

They ate the food while talking of inconsequential matters, until a woman’s shrill cry broke out somewhere. “Alas, someone else has died,” Yankton’s words were ominous. “This afternoon a baby died across the way, too. I wonder who this time.”

Red Leaf had been lying on his stomach with elbows planted and chin nestling in cupped hands. Now he added his bit of news. “There’s a whole family down sick over that way,” he said and raised his chin momentarily to indicate the direction.

“So many deaths! So much sickness!” Waterlily sighed, thinking of her grandfather far away.

It was long past midnight when she and Sacred Horse walked homeward, hand in hand in the dark. They were both sobered by the sorrowful atmosphere that pervaded the entire circle, by the wailing that started up here and there as the news spread. It was a portentous sound. Anything could happen on the morrow.

Waterlily sat in her tipi doing fancywork. Two days ago her husband had taken some horses that his father had promised sometime during the summer to a relative in a distant camp circle. He had left before sunrise the day after their visit with the social parents across the circle. His elder sister Echo could be heard just outside. “No, no, daughter, you may not go along! Stay here with your aunt. I shall be back soon.” Then she looked in at Waterlily, “Sister-in-law, I am going to a tipi yonder, where a kinswoman has just died. Your little niece Robin will stay. I do not like to take her to a death because she always screams so, whenever I wail, trying to help me.”

“Of course,” Waterlily answered. The little Robin came inside and stood there, pouting her lips and frowning to keep back the tears. Then, all of a sudden, apparently having conquered herself, she went limp where she stood and crumpled to the floor, all joints giving way at once. When finally settled, she was in perfect sitting position as became her sex, with both legs flexed toward the right, a prim little copy of the women about her. Already, at four years of age, it was habit.

Before Waterlily could think how to interest her in something, other mothers had come with their little ones and turned them in. They too were going to the death. “Sister, this one will sit with you.—Now, you mind your mother!—If she does not mind, sister, tell me when I return.” “Cousin, I am leaving my youngest. He hears very well, the little thing; he will be no trouble. Just tell him to be still. He hears very well.” She meant he was quick to obey.

Thus before long Waterlily had eight small children on her hands while their mothers went off to wail over the dead. She had no trouble in keeping them happy. Actually, they managed that themselves, playing quietly at various pastimes. At the start they were politely aware of her and stopped, every time she glanced at them, to explain in full detail what they were playing. But after a while they forgot her and went into their activities in earnest, leaving Waterlily to work uninterrupted.

At noon she fed them all as they sat around her outdoor fire, and in the afternoon she took them for a walk to the wood. They found many tree mushrooms that stuck out from the trunks or branches like immense white ears. It was because of this that they were called tree ears. The tree ears on boxelder and cottonwood were especially preferred, in that order, so succulent and flavor-some were they when cooked with dried buffalo meat. The children pried them off with poles and let them fall, unbroken if possible, into the blanket that Waterlily held below to catch them.

When the little party reached home late in the day, they found the mothers back, cooking for their families around their outdoor fires. Red-eyed and weary, the women sighed and sniffled eloquently now and then. Otherwise they refrained from needless conversation, as became their mood after weeping over the dead.

Only the senior wife, Taluta, was articulate. “So many deaths lately! So many, that I must wail again and again until my eyes are dimmed! My head too, how it throbs!” And she commenced binding her head tightly with a strip of doeskin. But she was not complaining. The truth was that she took a certain pride in fulfilling all her kinship and social duties well, down to commiserating the bereaved and wailing for the dead, for the good woman had a reputation to uphold. “She never misses a death, no matter how humble the one who has died. How good

she is! Humans should care for each other so, and should take time to honor one another's passing. Oh, may great crowds throng her tipi when it comes her time to go. It is as she deserves," people often said of her. She was not going to let them down.

Instead of one death there had been several, and the woman had gone about wailing, from one to another. "Oh yes, I know I overdid today. After three places I was coming home to rest. But when I passed a tipi where a strange young man lay unmourned, I had to stop and wail over him, too. I always say that while I live, no human being shall go out in utter stillness, like an animal," the senior wife declared, lying down after binding her head.

The fact was that the epidemic was spreading and that the new blankets which the sons of Buffalo Boy had brought home were infested with deadly germs, against which the people had no immunity. Through give-aways and also as simple courtesy gifts, those blankets had been changing owners and carrying smallpox from tipi to tipi. The people, however, did not connect the sudden series of deaths with the new blankets, and at the same time that they were frightened by the disease, they welcomed the carriers of it.

Good Hunter returned from the council tipi and went straight to his daughter Echo. Waterlily, who owed him avoidance respect, slipped quickly into her own tipi when she saw him coming, so as not to hamper him in what he might have to say to Echo. But tipi walls being only skin deep, she could not help overhearing him, for Echo's home was next to hers. "Daughter, too many people are dying too fast," he said. "It is now plain to the council that the matter is grave, and likely to grow worse. Once before this same many-sores sickness visited other camp circles, and many, many people died of it. So before any of our group gets it, you must leave and stay in the wilds until it is safe for you to return. That way you can escape the sickness. Stay somewhere along Buzzard Creek. I will send for you when it is right."

"Of course, father, since you say so," Echo replied.

"Tell my son-in-law to have the horses ready so that you can leave at dawn. Take your sister-in-law with you, and your mother also. Already she has partly sickened herself from wailing so much. It will be best for her to get away. Take what you will need of food and clothing, but travel light. Luckily, there is always plenty of game along the Buzzard. In the hills on either side there are deer. When your brother returns I will send him out to you. He and his brother-in-law will get all the food you need until this danger passes."

Through all this Echo kept up a wordless lullaby to the infant in her arms, whistling it between her teeth, as women did to put a baby to sleep. But she was also considering the matter. She asked, "And what of the others? My brothers, sisters, and cousins, and their families? What of my middle mother and my youngest mother—and what of you, Father?"

"They must all go, but in different parties and in different directions. Each group is better off alone. Your mothers will take their own children. As for me, I am staying here. For myself I have no fear of the sickness, and I shall not be sick. Do not be concerned for me, my daughter."

When Echo came in to tell Waterlily, she repeated what her sister-in-law knew already and was planning for. Echo told her not to bother about a tipi. Her travel tent was big enough for the five adults in the party, herself and her husband, Waterlily and Sacred Horse, and the mother. Echo's four children would fit in wherever they could. She would, of course, keep the baby with her. Robin could stay with her grandmother, and the lad of nine, whom they called

Little Bear, could occupy a small space with his younger brother, who was Robin's twin. "We can leave our home tipis standing and our things just as they are," Echo went on. "Close your entryway and tie down the door flap against stray dogs. Everything will be safe then. Your father-in-law is staying and he will look after our tipis and weight them down in case of storms or high wind. If my brother returns tonight, tell him at once that we leave at dawn."

"He should get home tonight; he has been gone two nights and three days already. Yes, I shall tell him first thing." Waterlily said this for something to reply. To herself, she was making rapid calculations on what to take.

Around midnight Sacred Horse did come in. When Waterlily awakened, she heard him sighing from weariness, and she could tell from his movements that he sat smoking in the honor-place. Her first impulse was to ask about his trip and tell him of their urgent plans to run away in the morning, but something checked her. This was no time to question him; she must wait until he volunteered to talk. Her own mother's wisdom in all wifely conduct was her guide.

Blue Bird never chattered idly on when Rainbow first got home. In a matter-of-fact way she always went about making him comfortable and providing a meal for him, speaking only if he asked a question of her, and then briefly. Not that she feared him; not that he was ever domineering. But she sensed when not to get in his way. When he was tired, let him be. Once she silenced the always eager Ohiya when he began flooding his father with questions. "Son, remember this," she told him then. "When a man toils all day for his family and comes home tired out, he does not feel like talking at once. Wait until your father is rested and his hunger satisfied, and then maybe he will tell you things."

Remembering that advice, Waterlily sat up slowly and said aloud to herself, "He is back. I must get him something to eat." So she did not oblige him to answer. But when she started up her fire in the middle of the tipi, working easily from where she was, he said, "No, don't cook anything for me—just some broth if any remains in the kettle." He sipped it slowly, drawing it in audibly at each sip, as though it were an effort. He had ridden without rest all the way. When he finished the broth, he told her about his trip and gave her the presents that his distant relatives had sent to her.

"And now for some sleep," he said, "I'm completely exhausted." And only then did Waterlily tell him the news. "There is something you must hear first—something your sister said to tell you as soon as you returned." She proceeded to relate everything that had happened since the night they went visiting together, when a few people died. And now more and more were sick, many had died, and more were dying, she said.

He listened without comment, and she went on. "My father-in-law has ordered us to scatter in small groups and stay out, away from other people. We are to form one party, with your sister and her family and your own mother."

"Very well. When do we start?"

"As soon as it is light enough to see, we are setting out, and I think it would be well if the horses we need were to stand ready outside."

"You think right." And then he began planning aloud, "Two horses ... more would be a



bother ... one is not enough. The bay can carry the drag with the things we need ... you will ride it. The sorrel for me. He is fast and I can move on him quickly if necessary ... Yes ... the bay and the sorrel.” So saying, and suddenly unmindful of his weariness, he went swiftly back out into the night.

## CHAPTER 16

As it turned out, the little company escaped nothing by running away. Echo and her mother had thoroughly exposed themselves to the disease in their zeal to comfort the sorrowful. They had visited the stricken homes without fear, unaware of the contagious nature of the affliction. Now, ironically, they were carrying along with them the deadly thing from which they were fleeing. Soon it was to break out in all its ravaging fury, and their stay in the wilds was to become a series of unforgettable horrors. Conceivably, there might be days just as bad in the future; it was hard to imagine that any could be worse. “It was like an evil dream” was the way it would be recalled in after years.

Starting with the senior wife, Taluta, mother of Echo and Sacred Horse, everyone in the party had the disease. Once begun, it was inevitable that it went the round. All nine persons were occupying the one tipi, sick and well side by side. They were resigned to this. Certainly nobody dreamed of isolating the first case as a check against further spread. Had one dared suggest doing so, it would only have shocked and hurt the others. They would have thought and said, “Our relatives are precious to us, sick or well. However loathsome might be their malady, should we separate ourselves from them, as if they were animals, just to save our selves? It is unthinkable! It is unworthy of kinship! There is something wrong with whoever proposes such a thing.” They would have seen it as a gross repudiation of fellow human beings.

Mercifully, the cases were staggered. The severest ones improved before others worsened; at least it was so with the adults. Thus there was always at least one woman able to prepare food and watch by the very sick ones, to do for them the simple things they could do—handing them a drink of water or rearranging the pillows and blankets for them. Beyond that, the sick asked nothing but to lie suffering quietly, much as animals might, and let the sickness have its way with them.

Waterlily ministered to them, numb of spirit and body. Too tired to think, she could only feel that here was something hideous to be lived through somehow. And then, one night, little Robin died in her arms. Scarcely had she laid her body down and picked up her twin brother to hold him than he too was gone.

These were Waterlily’s first major tragedies, although she had grown up on intimate terms with death—as who did not? In the past whenever she had wept over the dead, unless it was someone in her own family group, it was out of sympathy for the bereaved, or because the whole thing was dismal enough to rouse tears, or simply because it was proper to wail and one could generally work oneself up to it. It was proper to wail lest one be accused of being callous and negligent of kinship. But now she wept because she must, and could not check herself. When she was a very young girl, she had once pulled up her blanket over her head and

wailed, utterly dry-eyed, and was at once ashamed of and amused at herself. She could not feel any such grief then as now.

Not long after, her turn came and she lived through the wretched time somehow, indifferent even to the horrid marks that appeared on her smooth young face to mar its beauty. The two men also were sick one at a time, and that was a blessing. Not till Echo's husband was up did Sacred Horse take to bed. Always he lay with his face toward the tipi wall, thus shutting himself away from the others, asking only that Waterlily sit near his head to screen him from them.

At his worst, he crawled out of the tipi without a word and remained under a tree some distance away. When he did not return, his mother grew anxious. "Daughter-in-law," she said, "my son does not return ... perhaps if you went out to him ..." Before she had finished the sentence, Waterlily went.

"Your mother sent me. What is the trouble? Can't you get back? Is it that bad?" She did not chide him for coming out. There was nothing else for a sick adult to do so long as he had the strength and was in his right mind. In the interest of sanitation and modesty, adults always went outside to relieve themselves, no matter how they felt or what the weather.

"I could get back well enough," Sacred Horse said, "But I intend to stay out here." He was lying on the grass. She sat quietly by him a long time, until he spoke. "I may as well tell you that I am not going to recover. Even before this pestilence was a manifest thing, I felt, I knew, that I would die before long—of what precisely, I did not know then. You and the others have suffered too much already. I will not cause you further suffering by dying in the tipi where you must sit day and night. Can't you make some sort of little shelter for me here?"

So Waterlily and Taluta set forked posts into the ground and laid poles crosswise on them. They threw their largest bullhide over the poles and weighted the bottom on three sides, leaving the fourth side partly exposed for air and light. When they had brought sage leaves for a couch and spread a blanket over it, with supreme effort he dragged himself over to it and lay down.

"Now go back and rest—both of you," he said. His mother went, because she knew she was needed in the tipi. But Waterlily stayed by and gave him water whenever he asked for it. She brought out some broth his mother had made, but he did not touch it. It was late at night when he said to her, "You must go now and get some sleep." She was crying softly in the dark. When she could control her voice, she answered, "But ... but you might die. You might die in the night all alone."

He was gallant all the way. "Could you prevent that by staying here?" And it was in him to chuckle a little, sick as he was. Again, after she made no move to obey him, he said, "Look, I mean it. Leave me to meet this thing alone. I am very curious. Others die by themselves, and so can I." And then, with a touch of flippancy he added, "This is a *real* male you have married, don't you know!"

After that Waterlily could not protest. Since it was his wish, she must obey. To insist still would be to insult her husband, as though he were a child or a weakling whose mind could be changed for him. (Dakotas always resented that.) Quietly she withdrew, in tribute to him. "He ordered me back," she told her mother-in-law, who accepted her son's wishes, "Very well. He

always knew what he wanted. Very well—since it must be so.”

Waterlily did not sleep. She spent the night listening, worrying over him from a distance. As soon as it grew light enough, she went to him. Already he was stiff and cold. Weeping low, she drew his blanket up over his face very gently.

It was a problem to lay the body away with anything like the tenderness and decency the matter required. Sacred Horse had been a tall, well-knit man, whereas his brother-in-law was slight and short, and not yet strong enough after his illness to handle the body alone. The women had to help him bind it to an improvised stretcher and hoist it into a tree that overhung the shelter where death had occurred. By means of rope pulleys they raised the body and laid it across two branches. Then Echo’s husband managed to climb up and make the ends of the bier secure to the tree. Ordinarily men handled a man’s body and women a woman’s. But here, under grim necessity, the mother and wife and sister of Sacred Horse all had to help. They worked dry-eyed and stoical until it was done.

It smote their hearts, by nature so tender with their dead, to see, on looking up, that the body did not lie level, that the head was considerably lower than the feet. But at least it was there to stay, well beyond the reach of animals. In that they found some comfort.

After two days of mourning, Echo’s mother proposed that they move to another spot along the stream, away from the scene of so much grief where her son and two of her grandchildren had died. If they had remained there, they might have avoided further disaster. But they struck camp and traveled one entire day. There were now but six in the party—Waterlily and Echo, Echo’s husband, her mother, and her two children, the boy Little Bear and the babe-in-arms. On level ground, well protected on the north and west by hills rising away from the valley, they made their camp, with Buzzard Creek flowing below the steep bank not far from their tipi entrance. The woods were thick here, and rich in autumn colors. The view was exceedingly beautiful and lonely, but there were evidences of game in the wooded ravines running down between the hills.

Taluta roamed the woods and returned with more fuel than they could ever use. “Oh, but I marvel at the abundance of dead wood hereabouts! I cannot stop gathering it. Would that this were within reach of our camp circle!” she exclaimed from time to time.

Everyone was well now, and waiting to be sent for. They were impatient and even debated the wisdom of starting homeward anyway. Echo said, “Mother, the nights are getting very chilly. It might snow on us out here. And then if they missed our location, how could we find our way back? Even now all the land looks the same to me. With snow on the prairies we would be lost.”

“No!” Her mother was emphatic. “Your father said he would send for us when it was safe, and he will. He knows where we are. From boyhood he has roamed over all this region. We will wait.” Echo could not budge her, and she did not try. And of course Waterlily and Echo’s husband would accept the decision out of respect for their mother-in-law, even if they disagreed with her.

But one day it was she, the mother, who came home worried. In the wood she had seen a fresh track. It was much longer than Echo’s husband could have made, and the imprint did not look like that of a Dakota moccasin. The three women put out the fire and sat in the tipi,

growing more and more apprehensive as twilight came on. They spoke very low and only when they must. The worst of it was that Little Bear was still out somewhere, and his father had not yet come in from hunting. The boy never went beyond call, but to shout to him was out of the question. They could only rely on his training to move stealthily whenever he was out alone, as he had been taught by his uncles to do.

After a long, tense wait they relaxed a little, since nothing had happened, and Waterlily said, still whispering, "I will go to the bank and call softly. Perhaps my nephew is down by the stream."

"Please do, sister-in-law," Echo said gratefully. "He may be fishing again—though I can't see why he bothers, when none of us care for fish, being plains people. How I dislike the smell of fish—so nauseating!"

Waterlily moved cautiously, going straight out of the tipi toward the bank. She crouched low and peered into the dark shadows below for a sight of the boy before she would call. And it was lucky for her that she waited, for suddenly there were loud war-whoops from behind the tipi. Another raid! The cries and the din were designed to confuse the inmates of the tipi. The enemy were attacking from behind, apparently having crept up under cover of the buffaloberry bushes that studded the land clear back to the hills. Waterlily, in line with the tipi, had not been seen.

In that sudden uproar she started to run along the edge of the bank but missed her footing and sprained an ankle. Next instant she was rolling into a narrow gully that cut into the bank from the stream. Too frightened to act, she lay motionless. The screaming and yelling and the shooting of white men's guns—all the tribes were using them more and more—and the clatter of tipi poles being struck and broken continued. Her heart beat so loudly that the attackers must hear it, she thought, except for their frenzied racket and their shouting at one another in an unknown tongue. Urging and exciting each other to more and more havoc, no doubt.

But at last the tumult died away as the enemy withdrew in the direction from which they had come. Now Waterlily might safely come forth from her hiding place, were she not too stunned to make the effort. The gully fitted her body snugly. Looking up, as though from an open grave, she could see the stars. The whole constellation of "man-being-carried" (the Big Dipper) was in sight. At first it was over on one side of her fragment of sky. Not until it had swung around and was disappearing on the other side—however long that would take—could she work up enough courage to utter a sound. Even then, she could call only in low voice, "Is anyone left alive?" There was no reply. After a good while she tried again. This time Echo's voice moaned, "Sister-in-law, I alone am alive, alas ... but I am like one dead."

Waterlily managed to climb up the bank. Able to walk though her ankle was swelling badly, she limped back to the tipi. In the darkness she felt Echo's head and wept to find that the scalp had been cut away, leaving a raw, wet spot on her crown. Elsewhere on her head there were ugly gashes, too. Her baby, clasped in her arms still, was dead from an arrow that just missed Echo.

Echo's mind came and went, and there was nothing to do but wait for daylight. Whenever she grew faint and cold, Waterlily rubbed her wrists and dashed cold water in her face. It was all she knew to do. Sometime after the attack Little Bear had stolen into the tipi all atremble.

Young as he was, he had had the sense to lie low and thereby had saved himself. His father and grandmother were missing. It added to Waterlily's distress that he kept threatening to go out and look for them, and she had to keep begging him to stay in. When it grew light enough to see, they found Taluta lying dead some distance out, having been scalped and knifed savagely.

In one of her lucid moments, Echo asked Waterlily to help her down to the stream. "I try to remember, but I keep forgetting," she explained, meaning she kept losing consciousness. "If I could just wet my face and head in living water, I might remember permanently." Waterlily was small-boned and of delicate build. The weight of the heavier woman leaning full against her put such a strain on her ankle that she could hardly bear it. But she managed to get Echo down to the water and seat her at the shallow edge.

Echo apparently had the right idea; living—flowing—water was good medicine. Moving along with a will of its own (so it was said), a stream carried life-giving properties to everything that it touched along the way. As it could revive all manner of grasses and trees, so also it could revive mankind. Water was holy. From then on Echo was able to retain her consciousness.

On her way back, she paused by the body of her mother, still lying where it had fallen, and talked to the dead woman in the customary way, chiding her affectionately.

"Oh, Mother! Mother! Alas, is it thus that you must lie, with me helpless? Once too often have I obeyed you, my mother, from force of habit, grown woman though I am, as though I were still a child. Oh, Mother, if only we had started homeward when I wanted to go. But no. 'Wait for your father,' you said. 'He will not fail us,' you said." And she sat down for a long, unhindered cry beside her dead.

Meantime Waterlily prepared to lay her mother-in-law's body away. There was nothing to do but drag it on a heavy buffalo skin to a place sufficiently removed from camp and out of sight. There she and the boy Little Bear carried stones to cover it. This they continued doing whenever they were at liberty, until the mound was so large that no marauder lacking hands and the intelligence to remove stone after stone could molest the body. Waterlily was thankful that she had thought in time to lay Echo's baby in its grandmother's arms, and so to finish the burial of both at once.

The days that followed were a time of utter dejection. The wretched tipi, though Waterlily had mended it to the best of her ability, was no longer stormproof and no longer in shape to stand firm, being short of poles. When it rained, their things were soaked; and when winter came, it was plain, they would suffer cruelly from the cold. The problem of food also became desperate, until all they could rely on was an occasional rabbit that the boy snared or a bird that he killed with his blunt arrows.

Yet Echo made no further reference to going home, and Waterlily did not discuss the possibility of their trying it. She knew what Echo waited for—her husband's return. It was a futile hope—if he were alive he would have been home long ago—but yet she clung to it in silence for many days.

At last she could talk casually about their situation. "We must stay here—until he gets back. Well, we have to stay here, anyway, seeing that the enemy took all our horses. We are afoot; how *could* we go?" She was at last facing facts. But again there were times when her fortitude

failed her. Then she would weep—always for her children. “Oh, if only they had been sick long enough to cause me weariness in watching over them! Oh, if only I might have suffered for want of sleep and felt fatigue in caring for them! How satisfying that would have been! If, in their illness, they had been whimsical and petulant with me, how gladly I should have stood it! But no. They had to die quietly and quickly, without being any trouble. And that littlest one—she even died for me, in my stead. Oh, if only I had been able to make pretty moccasins for their dear feet, that they might lie buried wearing them! These shall be my regrets till I die!” At such times she would not be comforted, and Waterlily was too wise to try.

And then, when things were their blackest, when not a morsel of food remained, a rider stood on the hill above their camp, looking down at them. “Quick! Come inside! He may be an enemy scout!” The three survivors huddled in the tipi, fearing the worst, until the man began to sing a dirge—in Dakota. They knew then that whoever he might be, he realized their plight and would rescue them.

He turned out to be a cousin of Echo, from a camp circle along the Missouri. Unaware of the pestilence, he had come to visit his uncle Good Hunter, who, in the same breath with which he greeted him, had sent him out after his aunt and her party. “Ah, my nephew, it is well that you have come. Go at once and find your aunt and cousins and their families and bring them home. Tell them it is safe for them at last.” And he had given him specific directions.

The cousin, immediately upon his arrival, went out to hunt and returned shortly with a deer. It was the first real food they had had in many days. And so he saved their lives. But Echo still showed no disposition to hurry home, and he, understanding why, said nothing, only caring for their needs and protecting them from day to day.

But one morning he came straight to Echo and stood near her as she sat on the ground. “Alas, my cousin,” he said, “I have waited here with you, hoping your husband would one day return. I was prepared to wait all winter if need be. But now, alas, my cousin, I have to tell you that he will never return. Last evening I found his body, out in those hills yonder, where he met the enemy like a man.” Echo heard this without tears. She seemed resigned. It might be that she had expected it all along. After a decent while she said to Little Bear, “Son, find your aunt and tell her we will go home now.”

The cousin improvised a travois and Echo rode on the seat behind. Waterlily rode the horse, which he led along. The boy walked by him or rode behind his aunt, by turns. Before they left they burned everything, including the tipi, each person saving only one fur robe for a wrap by day and a cover for sleeping. They kept the barest of cooking necessities for the trip homeward. It was not wise to spend whole nights sleeping on the way. They rested for short periods or for a nap or some food, and pushed steadily on, as much as the one overburdened horse could stand.

A pitiful sight they were, all brown and tawny and gray, their drabness almost indistinguishable from the sere prairies over which they crawled. They were wearing the last of the clothing they had brought out with them, long since bedraggled and soiled, ripped and torn. Even the last of the extra pairs of moccasins were now in holes. Their faces were blotched here and there with the marks of their disease, and their hair hung loose and neglected, though that was partly in mourning.

Though homeward bound, they were not excited or happy. Already they had learned from the cousin what the state of affairs was at home. Many familiar faces would be missing, for the cruel scourge had touched every family. In Good Hunter's *tiyošpaye* several had died, including the youngest wife, who was a cousin of the other two, and whose children were still small. Thus only the middle wife was left to Good Hunter, as he would soon know.

He himself had come through untouched by the disease. He refused to accept it and therefore he did not take it, the people were saying. He had gone everywhere unafraid and had laid many a child's body away unaided, thus helping those families whom circumstances had compelled to stay in the camp circle the entire time.

Having learned what they would find, the two women were aware that they must weep again when they got home—as if they had not done enough weeping already! Long since wearied to exhaustion, Waterlily thought she could bear no more of it. “Weeping, weeping, always weeping! Will a day ever come when I can be truly happy again?” she asked herself. She doubted it.

It was to a camp circle of ruin and desolation that they returned. And it was deserted. After Echo's cousin had set out to find them, the people, finally suspecting the contagion in their material goods, had burned everything they could do without, including their tipis. Then they had withdrawn to another site, in a wide valley nearby, where they were now settled in winter quarters.

From the hilltop where the returning party stopped and looked down they could see nothing at first. Only gradually were they able to delineate little makeshift dwellings set in clusters hugging the timberline. These were of grass or of skins thrown over dome-shaped frames of willow, and the people living in them had now been reduced to the very lowest poverty. They were in fact right back where their ancestors must have been before the advent of the horse. So they must live until spring, if possible. They must endure either cold shelters or smoke from the fires kindled inside to keep them warm. The wind flaps that controlled the draft in a conventional tipi would be sorely missed.

But at least they still had their horses. With them, the people could rehabilitate themselves when hunting was possible again, when the sick were well and strong once more and sorrowful hearts were healed. And then they would be happy as before, and feasts and ceremonies and play and warfare—all the elements that constituted their life—would be resumed. The industrious and the skillful would soon be well-off again; it was always so. But at present all were leveled very low. Every family was forlorn.



## CHAPTER 17

With Sacred Horse gone, Waterlily felt that she could not stay on with her relatives of marriage. The link that held her to them was broken. Kind as they were, she suddenly felt herself a complete stranger in their midst. They said to her, "His going makes no difference. You belong here." She did not think so, though she did not, of course, contradict them, for she still had a respect attitude to maintain. When her parents came for her, she would go home, for that was where she really belonged. Home! The very word thrilled her. But already it was beginning to snow—not serious snowstorms, but an occasional flake for a sample. Soon they must be winterbound, and then she would be trapped here inside a small shelter, with only formal relatives, and she would have to be self-contained and restrained. In such a confine, how could she sustain that manner until spring? For she knew well enough that her parents could not possibly arrive before then.

But the next best thing happened to her in a few days. Her social father and mother claimed her. "Come home, daughter," they said. "No wife needs to stay on where there is no longer a husband to draw her. You shall live with us, poor as our lodge is. At least it is no worse than anyone else's, and it shall be your home until your people come for you." Here was comfort beyond words. This was what auxiliary parents were for—to step in and take over in place of one's own parents in their absence, to reach out and extricate one and surround one with homelike tenderness. How all-sufficient kinship was!

Waterlily felt that with these social parents she could endure anything. Their shelter was, if anything, even smaller than that of Good Hunter, and would certainly be just as cold and smoky. But it was occupied only by the parents and the brother, Red Leaf, and herself. The atmosphere was one that allowed freedom from kinship taboos. She could stand the winter here.

It was entirely proper for Waterlily to go with those she called father and mother, since her husband was dead. The family of Good Hunter knew this and did not try to hold her. Yet, because she went, they did not therefore sever their ties with her. Their sense of responsibility for her remained—increased, in fact, for there was a child on the way, and it claimed solicitous interest in its mother. Particularly was this interest felt by the male collateral relatives of the dead Sacred Horse, his brothers and cousins.

Already they had conferred in secret about Waterlily. And when that cousin who had brought them back from the wilds took leave of her, he said, "May I see you in health some day, wife-of-my-cousin!" Then he added, "I have something I must say to you before we part. We in our group do not neglect our own. You are ours, wherever you go" (a delicate reference to the child she carried, who would be son or daughter to its father's brothers and male cousins). "Most of us already have our wives and families. And none of us is in a position to take a

second wife, being still not of that age and prestige when such a step is suitable.” Then he paid her a compliment. “Nor would we consider your being anything less than first wife to any man.”

Waterlily told him she had no thought of remarrying. But the man continued: “Do not vow that. You are just a girl; your life is only beginning. You will marry again, and that is right. Back home I have a young brother who is still alone. He is the likely one for you. If perchance he pleased you for a husband, it would be well, for the coming child’s sake. Wherever possible, a child should have for father one who is father to him already, and not a total, unrelated stranger. For the child, then, I entreat you to stay as you are. Young as you are, keep steady. Be not overhasty to remarry, but wait for my brother, whom I shall send to you.” He spoke earnestly, “Wait for Lowanla.”

Waterlily might have known. Once when Sacred Horse was telling her about his relatives in other camp circles and had spoken of his brothers and cousins, he had referred to one who was a very fine singer and who had entered the Sun Dance at an early age. But he had neglected to name the cousin, and Waterlily could not bring herself to ask, even casually, “What is his name?” for fear it might appear as though she were interested in other men. She had blushed to remember how once she had been carried away by a charming stranger who also was a singer and a very youthful Sun Dancer—so much so that she had taken water to him secretly. “But that was long ago, when I was very young,” she told herself, though she knew that only four winters had since passed. Out of loyalty to her husband and a willed indifference to that once charming singer, whose appearance had become but a blur in her mind, she had had no difficulty in shedding the whole matter.

And now here he was, turning up again—she was sure it was the same man—as a candidate for her next husband, without his knowledge! Ordinarily it would have been an exciting prospect, and certainly an odd coincidence. But now, so lately overwhelmed by tragedy, a confused and homesick young widow with child, Waterlily heard the cousin’s proposal, and even the name Lowanla, with complete passivity. She simply thanked the cousin of her dead husband for his concern and turned away.

The long winter in the cold, semidark hut was conducive to nothing but waiting with idle hands. Waterlily could not see to make anything beautiful for her coming baby. And she fretted under the enforced waste of time, with so much she wanted to do. Under such adverse circumstances it was impossible not to be homesick, but she must not let her kind parents see, lest it seem ungrateful of her. The concealing of her homesickness thus became a preoccupation, and she thought she was successful at giving an appearance of complete contentment. Therefore it came as a surprise when one day her mother returned from another hut down the timberline and said to her, “There, daughter, it is all fixed!”

“What is fixed, Mother?”

“That you shall go home. Yes, right now, even though it is winter. A winter trip for you toward a place for which you yearn is better than safety here where you try in vain to be happy.” She had guessed it. “You could become sick, doing that. But now your father has found a way for us to take you home.”

Then she explained. A war party was starting out toward the Blackfeet country, far off to the

northwest. When Waterlily's social father had heard of this, he had enlisted the warriors' protection on the way, as far as the camp circle of White Ghost, which would be only a little east of their route. They had agreed to travel slowly that far, to escort the young widow to her home.

But the neighbors advised vehemently against the trip. They came in with stories of how so-and-so was snowed under for many days and was almost suffocated until he worked his way out, and of how a woman had once died in a blizzard and was found in the spring, having perished in the act of giving birth. "Do not expose this young girl to that risk," they begged. "She has already been through too much." And they pointed out that this, the Moon of Raccoons (February), and the Sore Eyes Moon to follow were always marked with the trickiest of weather. "Why, out of nowhere a blizzard can come up, catching people unaware," they warned. The parents were disturbed by these stories, but once a way was indicated to her, Waterlily was determined to go home, come what might.

The women rode separate horses, and followed certain of the warriors who were assigned to vanguard duty. The others, including the social father, kept on either side of them and in the rear, much as they did when a camp circle was moving.

"Take plenty of robes," the war chief had advised. "Then, if we should run into a storm, we can set up willow poles anywhere and piece a tent out of the robes." As had been predicted, there was a big blizzard on the way, forcing them to stop. They hurriedly improvised a tipi in the lee of a high cliff and there they stayed for two days, waiting for the storm to spend itself. From long practice the warriors quickly arranged everything and prepared the food, which they served to the women.

While they waited there, some strange people came in one evening, a surprise because it was far from any human habitation. There was a man and his wife, both well over fifty, two girls, their daughters, and three small children. One of the daughters was with child. As if she were their mother the little ones kept close to the man's wife, a stupid-looking woman who said not a word more than necessary. Only the man talked, plausibly enough, accounting for their unexpected presence out there. But he was plainly evading the truth.

After they had gone, the warriors agreed that the man was probably a degenerate character who lived away from civilization, that is to say, the camp circle, because of some crime against society. It was impossible that his wife at her age could be the mother of those small children, and since the man was the only male, the conclusion was inescapable. "Something very bad" was the way the warriors voiced their suspicion, carefully avoiding the ugly equivalent of "incest."

"It is unspeakable," the war chief went on. "No wonder that those who offend so heinously against kinship do not have the courage to mingle with decent folk, preferring to hide out where the other beasts are. He would not have ventured here, but hunger drove him in."

But while the visitors were there, the warriors nevertheless extended hospitality to them and, out of human decency, sent them away with quantities of jerked meat and other foods. They included the man in their conversation, even handing him the pipe. They must do this, for their own reputations as hosts. The rule said in effect, "Treat as a man any stranger in your tipi who bears the physical semblance of a man." What sort the man might be was not the

determining factor for extending such courtesies.

Both man and wife seemed to be hiding something, never once looking candidly at anyone. It was, of course, customary to avert your gaze when speaking to one of the opposite sex. That was a matter of decorum. But here was a man of shifting eye, who could not look straight at other men without flinching, and a woman who avoided the eyes of women. Something was surely amiss.

As for the daughters, they had no manners at all. Looking boldly into the warriors' faces and grinning foolishly, they sat down cross-legged in the manner of men. But soon they were devouring the food offered them, forgetful of their surroundings in their eagerness to eat. When finished, they whispered together a while and then went stumbling out the entrance without one word of thanks for the food, and without returning their bowls to the hostess. They were quite incredible.

It was the little ones, however, who excited Waterlily's real pity. When there was an awkward silence, after she and her social mother had tried in vain to chat with the woman, she turned to the children. With a smile she reached out a friendly hand to them and was shocked by their sudden reaction. All together they shrank back and began wrinkling up their noses belligerently at her with a lightning rapidity and a precision that made it comical. Then they settled back against their mother, who made no show of correcting their unfriendly actions. And next, from the folds of her wrap, they stuck out their tongues repeatedly while Waterlily gazed on them in amazement. Instantaneously they had turned into wild cubs, ready momentarily to resist being picked up and carried away. After such a complete rebuff, Waterlily sat listening to the men's talk and forgot the strange children for a time. Much later when accidentally she again looked their way, there they were, all quietly staring at her with fear and hostility in their shining black eyes, which never wavered once, lest she make another attack and they be caught off guard. Friendship had been omitted from their experience, along with everything else that makes life warm and pleasant.

Here were unbelievably wild, untutored children. No one had ever said to them, "No, don't do that ... see, nobody does so!" and thereby shamed them into good behavior toward those about them. There were no others about them from whom they might learn by imitation. And so they were growing up without civility—and the results were terrifying to see. Camp-circle people were civilized; they knew how to treat one another. They had rules. These children were wild because they lacked any standards of social behavior.

It came over Waterlily as she observed the unfortunate children, so unkempt and so hostile, how very much people needed human companions. It was the only way to learn how to be human. People were at once a check and a spur to one another. Everyone needed others for comparison, for a standard for himself. This measuring and evaluating of self was only possible in camp-circle life, where everyone was obliged to be constantly aware of those about him, to address himself to them in the approved ways. Thus only did people learn to be responsible for and to each other and themselves.

Waterlily used to think that critics and gossips were a public nuisance. But now, seeing these wild people with nobody to criticize them, she decided that perhaps they were an actual necessity, that maybe they could not be spared. If it were not for the critics, people could never

know whether they were being at their best or their worst. Here were people unquestionably at their worst—and they did not know it! They did not know enough to care how they must appear to the party they had evaded; they were unconscious of being judged by them. It was a tragic thing, to stay alone like this, in a benighted state. It was better to stay with other people and try to do your best according to the rules there. Waterlily of course did not say this in so many words, to herself; nevertheless, it was what she sensed keenly as she sat watching the children.

Late that night the storm abated and the moon broke through, shining with a diffused light through the air still dense with flying particles of snow. It gave an unearthly quality to the scene. The weather judge stood outside. “By morning it will be possible to start out. We must avoid the ravines, which will be packed with snow, and keep along the ridges where it is windswept, for then we can travel right along,” he said.

He was right. The morning was clear and crisp, sunny and cold. The sky was a blue of the deepest intensity, and as far as the eye could see, frosted snow glittered like stars—on trees, bushes, shrubs, and rocks, and over the mantled prairies. Everything was pure white, except for a dark patch here and there in the shallow dips of the land, where tall stalks of yellow grass stiffly perforated the crust. It was a perfect winter day, and the party traveled contentedly. All day long, it seemed to Waterlily, the only sounds were the crunch, crunch, crunch of breaking crust and the rhythmic squeak of soft snow underneath with every step of her horse.

So they continued for three more days, before they found White Ghost’s winter quarters. The war party escorted Waterlily and her social parents directly to Rainbow’s tipi. After they were well feasted, they went on. Waterlily’s social parents were invited to remain as guests until spring, and they could accept in good conscience, knowing that Red Leaf was safe in the care of his uncle and aunt and other relatives back home.

Before she was twenty years old, Waterlily had crammed into a single year enough of life to last her a long while. It was only after the last Sun Dance, in the Moon When Animals Fatten (June), that she had ridden away to be the wife-by-purchase of Sacred Horse the boy-beloved. And now, the following Moon of Raccoons, here she was, back again among her own people, a widow and a mother-to-be. Everyone was there to welcome her back into the environment that was hers by right of birth—that is to say, everyone but her brother Little Chief. He too had married and was at the time visiting his new in-laws at some distant camp circle, though not too far.

“But he will return as soon as he hears that his sister has come home to stay. You mark my word he will!” Black Eagle knew the deep loyalty between Waterlily and her brother. She, for her part, was quite aware of her prerogative to honor Little Chief by giving to his wife some especially beautiful item of dress, a handsome gown or a wrap perhaps. For it was the custom, part of the ancient ways of doing.

“Just what can I give my new sister-in-law?” she asked herself. “I brought back nothing to speak of—how could I under the circumstances?” She would have to get something from her mother or a relative in the group. Nor would she have to ask; they would offer it, she knew, because they would realize her obligation.

It was not that Good Hunter’s family had neglected her, but that they literally had nothing for her to bring home after the pestilence and many deaths. As she took leave of her father-in-law

he had for the first time addressed her directly, always having avoided doing so before, out of his respect for an avoidance relative. He had said to her: "Go in peace, wife-of-my-son. I shall come north to see my grandchild as soon as I can appear with something worthy in my hand. At present, well, you know how it is with us. But were it possible to send you home according to your worth, a herd of American horses should be going with you." That was a high compliment, for he thought a great deal of his daughter-in-law.

Only too grateful to get home under any conditions, Waterlily had been satisfied to go without presents for her people. Only too happy to have her back, they were not looking for any. Her cousins Leaping Fawn and Prairie Flower were especially delighted, and told her over and over how constantly they had missed her. But Prairie Flower had certainly had time for other matters, too; she had married shortly after Waterlily went away, although she was almost two years younger. Leaping Fawn still gave every promise of becoming a perpetual virgin and was content, apparently, as she moved about with her customary assurance and dignity.

Smiling One was noticeably taller and was such a sweet young girl, with gentle manners and a shy way that was charming. A little listless and languorous she seemed, except when she spoke of the baby coming. And then she was all eagerness. "Sister, I shall take care of him all the time and never get tired!" So she had already pledged her days away.

And then there was Waterlily's young brother, Ohiya, whose early imitating of adult ways had resulted in her acquiring some parents in her time of need for home people. Now he was the elusive adolescent, always out riding with other boys, coming in rarely, only to be off again. "Every boy goes through this stage; it is natural," Blue Bird told her. "He is glad you are home." It did not disturb Waterlily that after their initial greeting she scarcely saw him.

The old grandfather lingered on, with good days and bad days alternating. At the end of summer they had been sure he was dying after his crony's death had left him entirely alone. It was because of that illness that Rainbow and Blue Bird had postponed their visit to Sacred Horse and his people.

The old grandfather lingered on, though he longed to die. "All my friends are gone; why must I live on?" he would cry out pitifully. And at such times only Waterlily seemed able to beguile him, with stories of her experiences and the people she had met down south. Ah, yes, he knew that region, that stream, that prominent man of whom she spoke; years ago he went everywhere. Had Waterlily also met so-and-so perhaps? Meantime she worked steadily on fancy work in order to have nice things ready for her baby. Already in that dark hut she had lost much valuable time. She must make it up.

Her mother, aunts, cousins, and others also made things for the baby. Even though he was getting no fancy cradle from his father's sisters, who were the proper relatives to provide that item for him, Waterlily knew that in a year or two they would send or bring gifts to him. He could afford to wait.

The Moon of Bursting Buds (April) was in the last quarter when Waterlily's baby was born, at the very place she used to dream about but hardly dared hope to be—at home, in a private tipi, with her own homefolk to help her through. It was nearly perfect but for one sad fact: her grandfather lay dying in one tipi while she gave birth in the one next to it. Simultaneously and

with perfect timing the baby came and the old man went, at dawn.

Many came to mourn at one tipi and rejoice at the other. Among them was one wise man who thought fit to harangue the crowd regarding the remarkable event. "Life never ends; it slows down but to pick up and go on again," he said. "The boy is the old man; he is privileged, for he has acquired the qualities readymade for him from the old one. He is strangely blessed. His grandfather has left him those traits he made for himself through a long life—gentleness, kindness, fortitude, patience. The boy should carry his name."

But his naming rite was still in the future. Even before he was born, Waterlily had given her son a name and called him by it in her thoughts. It was Mitawa, which means My Own. The following two months sped by unnoticed by the young mother absorbed in her baby. Her cousin Prairie Flower had also given birth to a boy, and the two girls who had always been congenial now had another common interest in their new and happy role of motherhood.

Waterlily's past griefs now seemed like a dream that grew daily more dim. And then, one day while she sat alone outside her mother's tipi, which was again her home, her attention was suddenly caught by a young traveler coming toward her and leading his horse. There was something about him so like her dead husband that for a moment she gasped. Then it dawned on her. This was the man Lowanla of whom she had been told. Yes, it was just as she had thought; there couldn't be two Lowanlas, both skillful singers, both youthful Sun Dancers. This was the one to whom she had once given water to quench his thirst. He was older by five years, but he appeared just as youthful and handsome as then. Her heart beat fast, but she managed to be composed as she greeted him.

As he ate the hospitality food she set before him, their conversation was placid enough, and conventional. He told her who he was, the cousin of Sacred Horse, and that he had come "to take care of my son—if that should be agreeable to you." And Waterlily said, just as matter-of-factly, that if that was his wish truly, and not because someone sent him, it could be so. And thus they became engaged. With a babe in her arms, the only way to meet a new husband was with dignity, and with a touch of sadness over Sacred Horse, whose untimely death had brought them together, and to whom they were both loyal.

All the relatives were happy for her and for the child. While kinship law did not demand that a widow marry a brother or cousin of her husband, it was always desirable for the child's sake, that he might have for a father one who was his father already. All the relatives helped to get a home ready for the two, and there they took up their common abode; and that was the marriage.

Waterlily had been elaborately bought once; this time she married in the other sanctioned way, the way most women married who had the good sense not to elope—the way of mutual agreement openly declared. Back when Lowanla had first charmed her, she might have lost her head and eloped with him, being very young and much infatuated with his graceful movements and attractive ways. But that was all in the past. She was older and far wiser now; she had herself well in hand. She was marrying in a quieter mood and with tribal approval. For the Dakota woman nothing could be better than that.

After the sudden death of her husband, Waterlily used to think over her brief life with him and the memory would stab her heart. "Was it so difficult to feel at home with him? Did I have

to remain shy forever? Oh, if only I could have seen what was coming!” For too late she knew that she had been much too self-contained and uncommunicative and that to that extent she had been inadequate as a wife. Remorsefully she recalled a fleeting wistfulness in his patient eyes, as much as to say, “Oh, why can’t you be more sociable with me now?” What had ailed her anyway, that she had felt too tongue-tied to say anything? It was so unfair to him. Well, she saw how she had blundered then. Now it was too late to rectify that error. “But,” she vowed, “if I ever marry again, I will be better company much sooner, I will!”

And now here was her chance to keep that vow, with Sacred Horse’s own cousin. It seemed more appropriate, more just, than she thought she deserved it to be. From the outset life with Lowanla proved easy and pleasant, largely because of Waterlily’s changed attitude and behavior, and she was completely happy in her role of wife to him.

And now it was autumn. The time was right for gathering buffaloberries for winter use. The fruit was exceptionally plentiful this year; the getting of it would be rapid and easy. The berries grew each on its own short stem, but they clung in tight clusters to the twigs and larger branches of the bush. They were protected by long, thin spikes that made hand-picking tedious, if not impossible.

As everyone knew, buffaloberries were best left alone all summer, when they were acrid and puckery, hard and a dark, opaque red. It was not until the first autumn frost had worked its magic that, almost over night, they became tender and deliciously sweet. Then they glowed a yellowish red, as if from an inner light. There were always a very few bushes that bore all yellow berries. But red or yellow, they tasted the same and were sweet only after the first frost. They were no bigger than a small pea, or, at best, a middle-sized one. Because of their smallness and of the spikes that got in the way, the berries must be gathered wholesale by a method called “knocking off small things that fall readily.”

The women had organized into *tiyošpaye* groups, or into congenial parties of friends from here and there who wished to spend the day together and make of the communal enterprise a sociable excursion as well. At sunrise they went out and set up their awnings all along the first shelf of land above the valley floor where the silvery-leafed bushes grew thick. They spread blankets about and set their drinking water and food under the shades. There they left one or two of their party to look after things and keep an eye on the babies and small children who could not walk far. These women would get the noon meal for their groups when the sun stood overhead.

The workers wrapped their blankets about their hips skirt-wise and rolled and tucked the tops in about their waists. This left their arms free for action. And so, with each woman carrying a club of stout wood to knock off the berries, they dispersed in all directions among the countless bushes dotting the valley on both sides of the river as far as one could see.

Blue Bird, Leaping Fawn, Dream Woman, and First Woman set out together, leaving Waterlily and Prairie Flower, whose baby was hardly one moon old, to preside at their headquarters. The youthful mothers put their infants to sleep and then prepared to receive the berries as soon as the others would be filling their containers and bringing them up.

They sat working quietly for a while, processing the first of the fruit. But because the day was so mellow and peaceful, with autumn haze over the land, they must stop from time to time



to admire it. Waterlily sighed deeply. “Oh, cousin,” she said, “once, after that awful time in the wilds, I said to myself, ‘Will a time ever come when I can be truly happy again?’ And I was sure it never would. But I was wrong. Such a time has come, and this is it.”

After her year away and her bitter experiences in that time, the day and the setting were poignantly beautiful. All the familiar friends and relatives of her childhood were nearby, the women working below and the members of the men’s military societies stationed for the day out in those hills and distant peaks, ready to head off anything untoward that might otherwise endanger the women. Somewhere in those hills her new husband was hunting game for her and for her baby, who slept at her elbow, while she worked at this task that seemed no task at all. She felt infinitely content.

And as she worked she smiled now and again, delighting in the dear sounds rising from the women below: unrestrained feminine laughter and good-natured banter, occasional mock scolding or lusty joking by those with an earthy and robust bent, sudden cries of happy surprise upon the finding of another bush even more lavishly laden or with still bigger and sweeter berries, shouted warnings to mobile children forever gravitating toward danger or mischief the instant backs were turned. A piercing shriek because a startled hare sprang away from a bush, startling in turn the women who had disturbed it; the hue and cry when someone nearly stepped on a rattlesnake, and the excited advice from all sides—until it was safely dead—on how to kill it. All these sounds rose against a background of incessant clatter, clatter, clatter, of wood against wood, resounding up and down the valley. The berry pickers were beating the branches with their clubs and knocking off the ripe fruit, which hung by practically nothing and rained down in sheets readily at each blow, onto the hides spread below to catch it.

The two girls worked all morning without rest because the fruit came in so fast and there was so much of it. With a wooden mallet Prairie Flower crushed the berries lightly while Waterlily shaped the mash into small cakes, patting them firm with delicate fingers before laying them on fresh leaves to dry in the sun. At noon they stopped to build a fire and began cooking for their party. All the workers, seeing smoke curling up from their respective headquarters, began making their way back.

Presently they were seated in jovial groups under their awnings, and while they ate, they told funny stories on one another and laughed and joked heartily in a holiday mood, sharing their fun by shouting across from group to group till nearly all were laughing at the same things. After the meal they said, “Let’s rest a while through the heat of noon. Later we will go back to work again.” So they lay about in the shade of their awnings and slept.

Only Waterlily did not sleep; she lay gazing idly up into the tender blue sky, thinking many things. A fresh sense of security swept over her and her future looked very good. She had everything, she thought. Her brothers, Little Chief and Ohiya, would give her all the social backing a sister could desire. Already both had honored their little nephew by giving gifts away in his name. Soon they would be teaching him to ride and hunt, and to protect himself and grow up to be a real man.

Her younger sister, Smiling One, was lovely in Waterlily’s eyes, and her parents, so active and vigorous at their prime best, were ever selfless and adoring of her—as she was of Mitawa. There were also her aunts, the blunt but well-meaning First Woman and the more

delicate and sensitive Dream Woman, so mysterious and so good—they would always stand by her. It was the way of father's sisters and women cousins to overlook even one's faults out of loyalty to one's father, their brother, believing the best of one even when the worst was undeniably clear. Her uncles, Black Eagle and Bear Heart, out of loyalty to her mother, their cousin, stood second only to Rainbow in their readiness to help and protect her, should she ever need them.

"All my relatives are noble," she thought. "They make of their duties toward others a privilege and a delight." It was no struggle to play one's kinship role with people like them. When everyone was up to par in this kinship interchange of loyalty and mutual dependence, life could be close to perfect.

She went on with her reverie. There was her new husband, Lowanla, who had come so humbly, for all his own achievements and natural endowments, offering "to take care of my son." That was the usual, dignified way of proposing in a situation like theirs, and people praised him for his fine kinship sense toward his dead cousin's son. It was so correct.

But it was better than that for Waterlily, though of course no one could guess, from her sober acceptance of him. And now she was beginning to believe, from hints he had dropped, that it was better than that for him, too. She knew well enough that if the kindly Sacred Horse had picked her on first sight, she had picked this cousin of his long before, also on first sight. Now she almost dared to think that perhaps he had even wanted her first, if not at the same instant. "When I was leading the singing for the Omaha sitting that time, I first saw you standing there, in the crowd of onlookers," he had told her a few days before.

Her mind skipped about. Now she was thinking how she would always keep her baby's father in grateful, even affectionate, memory. How could she ever forget how kind he was? How easy he tried to make life for her in that far-off place. He was never domineering; what he wanted was always and only what he thought she wanted. And of course even if they were to have lived together for a lifetime, never would he have struck her as some men of short patience struck their wives. She was certain of that. She must tell Mitawa as soon as he could understand how his father was handsome and strong, gentle and kind, modest of his abilities as a hunter, thoughtful, and, above all, fearless—even unto death. Mitawa must be proud of him!

Then it occurred to her that she could begin at once to tell him, whispering it into his ear while he slept, creating about him an aura of the man whose child he was. Maybe somehow he would absorb it into his being; he could hardly do better for himself than that. She remembered how almost from the day Ohiya was born, her grandfather used to sit where he lay asleep, a tiny bundle of a child, and harangue on the making of a man. No doubt that was what made Ohiya grow up prematurely self-reliant, eager to attempt adult and manly responsibilities before his time. Imagine it—he had even made a friendship pact and gone into fellowship with a visiting playmate. And look what it had meant for her when she was far from home and lonesome!

Next Waterlily recalled the figure of a woman that Lowanla had on his little finger when he underwent torture in the Sun Dance. And again the plaguing question: Whom did it represent? Her, by any chance? She wouldn't ask him—yet she wondered, especially since he had once spoken of how a strange girl had brought water to him. "I had no girl," he had said, "so

naturally I was not expecting to have water slipped in to me. But some girl took pity on me. I don't know who she was. She ran off into the darkness. But she left me a little bucket. I still have it. I'll show it to you. Would you like to see it?" He had looked searchingly at her, but she had contrived to remain cool. "She ran off in your direction," he had persisted when she tried to change the subject. "In the direction of Palani's camp. That was where you were visiting, was it not?" Then he had added teasingly, "Maybe it was you!"

"There were many people at the Sun Dance. As I recall, the tipis stood three deep in our section, one row behind another. Surely in all those families there were many daughters and it could have been any one of them." Secure in her control of her secret, she had dared to needle him later on. "It was too bad, wasn't it, that your water bringer did not care enough to make herself known? After going that far, why didn't she? It was cruel to leave you wondering forever." He had smiled ruefully.

All these things Waterlily ran through in her mind, staring at the sky and the white tufts of cloud and not seeing them. The tired women slept prosaically on but she was wide awake and vibrant with happiness. Poor Lowanla, how much he did want to establish as a fact what he so desperately hoped was so! "Oh, if only I could know that you were the girl who dared do that for me!" he had said over and over.

"If you knew that, then what?"

"Why, if I knew, then I should be perfectly happy all my life." For a moment his wistfulness had stirred her pity and she was almost irresistibly tempted to break down and confess—but she had checked herself in time. For deep down in her heart she knew that she would never tell, never! Not even in exchange for what she would dearly love to know: whether that little figurine represented his prayer for her.

The cumulative wisdom of Dakota women, gained through experience from way back, told her it would never do. Of course she wanted him to be perfectly happy; she wanted everything for him. But also she feared the obverse of the kind of happiness he was asking for. It was suspicion. Insidiously it would start, and grow, and grow, tormenting him with an endless cycle of the same questions, until they would become an obsession. "If she, a well-brought-up girl, could do that for me, then why not for other men? Were there other men? Who were they?" In time a curtain of distrust would separate them, and that was no way for a husband and wife to spend their life together.

"No, never!" Waterlily whispered to herself, her lips tightening with determination. "He shall never know! He must get along with a little less than perfect happiness. It will be best that way."Biographical Sketch