Chapter 5
Regina

ABSTRACT

Regina is Isabelle’s eldest child and something of an anomaly when compared to her siblings. While the rest are tall, slender, and athletic, she happens to be short, overweight, and has always preferred books to sports. Such dissimilarities have caused her to feel very insecure about her appearance. Regina has attempted to compensate for her physical shortcomings through her intellectual superiority. So, for example, whenever any of her brothers or sisters teases her about her height, Regina will always respond by reminding everybody that she is “the smartest.” Despite the milieu of anti-intellectualism so pervasive among Indian youths, Regina was pushed to excel academically by her mother who wanted her to have all the opportunities that she herself never had. She graduated high school as valedictorian of her senior class and won a prestigious award for excellence in math and science that included a full scholarship to the college of her choice. This chapter introduces Regina.

PROFILE

Regina chose to attend Colorado College¹, an elite private liberal arts college with a long history of recruiting intellectually motivated Native American students, and graduated four years later with a Bachelor’s degree in anthropology—the first in her extended family to achieve such a milestone. Her accomplishment is even more impressive considering that she gave birth to a son at the end of her sophomore year. The fact that she managed to

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Regina graduate on schedule while raising an infant is a testament to her uncommon dedication.

Since graduating from college, Regina has been employed as an archaeologist for the Historic Preservation Department of the Navajo Nation. Her choice in careers is a bit out of the ordinary as it is a taboo for Navajos to come into contact with anything related to the deceased much less be involved with re-burying human remains or handling ancient artifacts. As it will become clear, this is much more than just a job for her. Under the tutelage of her colleagues, Regina is learning about Navajo traditions and customs that were never taught to her as a child. This cultural awakening continues an infusion of Indian pride initially sparked while she was away at college. Concomitant with these emergent pro-Indian feelings, however, are deep anti-White sentiments. It is no exaggeration to say that Regina hates White people.

Nature of Relationship

My relationship with Regina covers a wide range of emotions and can be divided into two disparate parts. I first met Regina when she was a fourteen-year-old teen-ager. Soon thereafter, she developed a huge crush on me. Suffering from a severe case of puppy love, Regina decorated the mirror in her bedroom with photographs of me that I had mailed to the family. (Whenever I returned for visits, her brothers would delight in pointing out the conspicuous outlines that were previously occupied by the now jettisoned pictures.) For my part, I never even entertained the possibility of reciprocating her amorous feelings. Instead, feeling somewhat uncomfortable and embarrassed, I tried to avoid her at all costs and waited for this adolescent phase to pass as quickly as possible.

The pursuit nevertheless continued unabated for several years until she met Marty, her first boyfriend, during her senior year of high school. Marty is the father of her child and, although never legally married, they have lived as husband and wife for almost ten years. Several family members have reported to me that I have been a frequent subject of conflict between them with Marty jealously accusing Regina of still harboring feelings for me. In an effort to respect their relationship and prevent any potential problems, I have deliberately maintained minimal contact with her.

The lack of closeness has been reciprocal. Although our brief interactions have been civil, I have definitely sensed some standoffishness or perhaps even hostility aimed in my direction. It is possible that Regina still holds a grudge against me for never returning her advances or that she is trying to placate
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