

Stolen Spirits

Chapter One

Sunday Evening

“No,” Diane cried as she threw her arm up to shield her eyes from the eerie sight.

“What?”

The sky darkened as a cloud covered the full moon. It was dusk and the effect was twilight zone-ish. Had Diane picked up on something Stacey couldn't see?

Stacey slowed then grabbed Diane's arm to stop her forward motion.

“You've been strange all night. What's up?”

“I don't know. It's hard to describe.”

“So try.”

Diane shook her head. Stacey was stubborn. If Diane didn't tell her they'd stand here all night. Then again, the way she felt, maybe that was best.

“Let's sit over there.”

Diane sauntered over to the swings. The school grounds provided a good spot for a chat. As they idly rocked back and forth, Diane admitted, “I have this weird feeling I can't shake.”

“Yeah, so?”

“Have you heard the expression '*someone walked over my grave*'?”

“Uh, maybe. I don't know. It sounds gory.”

“Whatever. This is something like that. Only worse.”

Diane had Stacey's full attention.

“The hairs on the back of my neck,” Diane shivered then rubbed her arms, “They won’t stay down and I have goose bumps.” Diane stroked her neck. “I’m cold, like something inhuman is breathing down my neck. I can’t warm up even though it’s August.”

“That’s weird.”

“There’s more. I cried tonight for no reason.” Diane rubbed her eyes. “Mom was talking to me. I don’t remember what it was about. I burst into tears. I was like, embarrassment much? Mom took me in her arms then rocked me like a baby. I longed for comfort. Part of me never wanted to leave her. Then I hugged my sister and brothers. I wish I could have hugged my dad but he’s not around since she took off and dragged us with her. I think everyone thought I was crazy.”

“Wow, that’s strange.” Stacey’s eyes darted over her shoulder. The conversation gave her the heebie geebies.

“Yeah, I know. I left though. I shouldn’t have cause I know it’s gonna get worse.”

“What? What is?”

“Yeah, well, I know, and don’t ask me how, but I just do. I know something bad will happen tonight. Scary bad, like you read in the papers or watch on TV.” Diane wrapped her arms around herself.

Stacey shivered. “But, how can you know that?”

“I just do. The worst part is this will happen no matter what. It’s like fate or chance. I can’t do anything about it. When the moon covered that cloud it confirmed my fears. I’m powerless to stop it.”

Stacey frowned.

“I know, I know, it sounds freaky.” Diane rushed to explain before Stacey voiced her thoughts aloud. “Sometimes I sense things. I can’t explain how or why I know, but I do. I could have some ability. Could be because I’m Cree.”

“What’s that got to do with anything?”

“Well, in any culture there are stories passed down from one generation to the next. Some people have powers. Not that I’d pretend to be an Elder. I’m not old or wise. I don’t have a special gift like chosen ones or a true leader. Yet I feel things. I guess you’d call it intuition. I don’t know.”

Diane flashed Stacey a long, hard stare. “You with me so far?”

“Yes,” Stacey whispered.

“First Nations and Inuit people talk about tricksters like Wisahkecahk (wee-sah-keh-chock or wih-sah-kay-jock), Nanabush or Raven when they tell creation stories. There are stories about the moon.”

Diane smiled, yet her eyes were sad, distant. Her head felt heavy on her neck.

“So what do tricksters have to do with the moon?” Stacey rubbed her face as a shiver coursed down her spine. “What are tricksters anyway?”

“Tricksters are supernatural, like mythical figures, you might call them shape shifters.”

“Whoa, is that why they have so many names?”

Diane stared at Stacey. She shook her head, confused by the question. "So many names," Diane repeated. "Oh, I see what you mean. No, it depends on who tells the story."

Diane pumped her legs, back and forth, back and forth. Her swing rose higher and higher.

Stacey pumped her legs in unison.

Diane shook off her gloom. "My grandmother, she's Cree so when she refers to trickster it's Wisahkecahk. The Ojibway or Anishinaabe trickster is Nanabush. Then Raven is around British Columbia groups. There's other names but those are the ones I remember."

"Wow, you know stuff."

"Nah, not much. My grandparents tell stories, especially my grandmother. She likes to tell creation stories about how things came to be in this world. She talks about animals and nature, how the sky and everything here on earth are gifts for the people. Grandmother's into that sort of thing."

Stacey smiled. She liked the direction the conversation had taken.

"Now if I want to explain the moon to you I'd have to bring Wisahkecahk into it. That's how it makes sense. Trickster can be a creator, transformer, joker, truth teller or destroyer. When I check out the moon tonight I see Wisahkecahk gazing down at us. Coyote could be howling right now to get moon's attention. Coyote likes to cause trouble," she added with a tight smile.

"When cloud covered the moon I saw something pass in front of it." Diane closed her eyes, shook her hair back then flashed her eyes open. "If this was a

trickster tale, I'd say cloud covered moon so no one would see moon come down to earth to ask coyote to be quiet. Coyote would agree to moon's request. He wants moon to think he's listening. In reality, coyote likes moon to visit him. When coyote wants moon to come closer to earth for a visit he'll howl again. That's the way coyote is."

"Hey, did you make that up just now?"

"Yeah, so?"

"You could be a storyteller one day, like your grandmother."

Diane shrugged.

"What did you see pass in front of the moon?"

Diane turned away then mumbled something Stacey couldn't hear.

"What? I couldn't understand you."

"It was Wisahkecahk."

"Yeah, so?"

Diane took a deep breath then turned toward Stacey. "Tonight, Wisahkecahk was the destroyer," she whispered.

"What does that mean? What are we going to do?" Stacey's voice rose as she caught Diane's tone.

"We have to be on our guard, extra careful. I don't want to be around strangers." Diane clenched her jaw then spat out, "There could be a psycho out there killing teenage girls."

"What?" Stacey shrieked. She threw her feet down to stop her forward motion. Dust flew up as she jumped off the swing to confront her friend.

“Relax.” Diane shook her head then jumped off the swing mid-pump. She landed with a graceful leap a few feet in front of the dirt, safe on the grass. As she turned to Stacey she added, “I’m sure it’s not as bad as that. I just wanna be cautious, take it easy.”

“Yeah, okay, sure, sounds like a plan.” Stacey ground her teeth, a nervous habit from childhood days.

Stacey replayed the conversation over in her head during the next few days.

If only she’d listened to Diane.

Diane could have had special powers.

Too late for regret, the deed was done...