

# **Sacagawea**

**Brave Explorers Every Child Should Know**

*by Karla Akins*

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To my precious granddaughters, Abbey, Lauren, Trinity, Avery and Maggie, who are privileged to call themselves Native Americans: Choctaw, Cherokee, Miami and more. You have inherited a part of this nation's history I wish I could. How very proud I am to call you my girls.

And to my children, Melissa, Jesse, Noah, Isaiah and Isaac—Native Americans because I married your very handsome, wise and loving, Native American father.

*“May the Warm Winds of Heaven  
Blow softly upon your house.  
May the Great Spirit  
Bless all who enter there.  
May your Moccasins  
Make happy tracks  
in many snows,  
and may the Rainbow  
Always touch your shoulder.”  
--Cherokee Blessing*

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# Chapter 1

AD 1809

“Mama, tell me again about [Man-With-Red-Hair](#).”

Sacagawea bathed her young son’s brown shoulders in the sparkling waters of the Missouri River and fought back tears.

“Man-With-Red-Hair is good, strong and kind. He will take good care of you, Pompey, and teach you the ways of the white man.”

“*Tatis* is a white man.”

“Yes, your Papa is a white man. And so are you.”

Pompey held out his golden brown arms and looked at each of them. “My skin is not like *Tatis*’ skin.”

“It is your blood that is white, Pompey. It is half white and half Shoshone. That makes your blood very special.”

“But when I bleed, my blood is red.”

“When you are older, you will understand more.” Sacagawea sprinkled his face with river water to distract her inquisitive son from his questions.

Six-year-old Pompey splashed his mother and threw hands full of water to the sky. He did not understand that he would soon leave this homeland to live far away in St. Louis. He had never seen a city, a building, or a school. Here in the village, his days were filled with running free, sliding down hills with [river otters](#), chasing [prairie dogs](#), and pretending to be a Hidatsa warrior. Soon, he would say good-bye to forests of [cottonwoods](#), wild prairies of [buffalo grass](#) and bushes of wild grapes and berries to start a new way of life with Man-With-Red-Hair. He would go to school, learn to speak and read English, and dress in white man’s clothes. Sacagawea knew that Pompey would

need to know the white man's ways to be a successful warrior. She wanted him to know the things in the books that Man-With-Red-Hair knew, and draw the marks that made his name.

Sacagawea chased her naked son, laughing and teasing, up the bank and toward the Hidatsa village where she lived with her sister, Otter Woman, and their French-speaking husband, Toussaint Charbonneau. From the top of the hill, Sacagawea spotted thin lines of smoke dancing in graceful rings from the old [Fort Mandan](#) built by the [Corps of Discovery](#). Abandoned by the explorers after their [Great Journey](#), she now shared its rooms with Charbonneau, Pompey and Otter Woman. Sacagawea's husband had adopted the ways of the Hidatsa and acted very little like Man-With-Red-Hair. He liked sleeping on the ground, wearing Hidatsa clothes and living the Hidatsa ways.

Pompey rushed into the cabin and scrambled onto a bunk along the wall where his mother's [basket](#) of special things was kept. He rifled through the little vessel and pulled out a paper with scratches on it that only his father could read. But Sacagawea knew the contents, and had pretended to read it to her son many times. She didn't want Pompey to know how little she could do with papers and books compared to his father.

"Read me the letter, *Igá*."

Sacagawea smiled and took the ragged note from Pompey's hand. "Mama. Say 'Mama,' Pompey. I'm your Mama when we go to St. Louis, remember?"

"Mama, read me the letter." Pompey bounced on the top bunk.

"When you put on your [ihoisi](#), and you are completely dressed, I will read it to you."

Pompey jumped off the bunk and ran to his fresh set of clothes atop the pallet of [buffalo blankets](#) where he slept. He dressed hurriedly while his mother fingered the letter tenderly with her long brown fingers. She held it to her nose and tried to catch the scent of Man-With-Red-Hair, but five years of time and humidity had erased that trace of her kind friend.

Pompey hopped across the room to where his mother sat on a pallet of furs by the fireplace. Living in the fort was different than living in the [earth lodges](#) she'd grown up in as a Hidatsa

maiden. There, the fire was in the middle of the room. She never understood why the white men put their [fire in the corner](#).

Otter Woman ran into the cabin carrying a basket of [wild blueberries](#). Her teeth and mouth were dark blue with stains and Sacagawea put her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing. Otter Woman must have been hungry.

“Where is *Tatis*?” Pompey hugged Otter Woman’s legs.

Otter Woman cleared her throat to catch Sacagawea’s attention and shook her head. “He is busy. Leave him alone now.”

Sacagawea understood and motioned for Pompey to come. “Sit here, Pompey, and I will read the letter.”

Pompey bounced back to his mother and leaned against her while she pretended to read the letter Man-With-Red-Hair had written to her husband:

*“Dear Charbonneau,*

*You spent a long time with me on my journey and your woman who accompanied you that long, dangerous, and fatiguing route to the Pacific Ocean and back deserved a greater reward for her attention and services on that route than we had in our power to give her...*

*As to your little Son (my boy Pomp) you well know my fondness of him and my anxiety to take him and raise him as my own child. If you accept either of my offers, bring down your Son and your woman, Janey, to take care of the boy until I get him. Wishing you and your family great success & with anxious expectations of seeing my little dancing boy, Baptiste, I shall remain your Friend, William Clark”*

Pompey asked the same questions he'd always asked when his mother read the letter. "Who is Janey?"

Sacagawea smiled. "That is what Man-With-Red-Hair called me. It was his white man name for me."

"Who is the dancing boy?" Pompey teased his mother, knowing full well the answer.

Sacagawea kissed Pompey on the nose. "Man-With-Red-Hair always called you Pompey because of the way you bounced and danced on my back when I carried you. Your Christian name from your papa is Jean-Baptiste. But we've always called you Pompey."

"Man-With-Red-Hair likes me?"

Sacagawea nodded. "His heart is full of *kidesi*—much love for you."

A shadow filled the doorway and Sacagawea jumped up to hide the letter.

"Are you reading that blasted letter to my boy again?" Charbonneau staggered across the room in three strides and slapped the basket off the bunk. "What have I told you about reading that letter? I ought to burn it right now."

Before Charbonneau could pick up the little scrap of paper, Otter Woman quickly scooped it up and hid it in her dress. She knew it was one of her sister's most valuable treasures. Unable to find it, Charbonneau turned to vent his rage toward Pompey. Sacagawea picked Pompey up to shield him.

Otter Woman stood between Charbonneau and her sister. "You are sick again with *midiaui*."

Charbonneau lifted his fist but Otter Woman ducked, and he stumbled across the room and fell in the doorway. Otter Woman stood over him with her hands on her hips. "Get out of here until you are empty of the spirit drink. I'll not have you hitting that boy. It is bad medicine to hit your own flesh."

Hidatsa women owned the homes they lived in. They were taught to be strong caretakers and defenders of tribe's children, and Otter Woman was as much a mother to Pompey as Sacagawea.

"A mother's sister is your mother," Sacagawea told Pompey many times. It was the Hidatsa way.

Charbonneau let out a loud snore.

He was asleep in the doorway.

Otter Woman shook her head and mumbled in her native Shoshone tongue. "I don't like that white man drink that makes men mean and sleepy. Now there will be no meat for supper."

It was the Hidatsa man's job to care for the horses and bring home meat.

Sacagawea hugged Otter Woman. "Thank you for saving us." She spoke in low, Shoshone tones that Pompey could not understand. "We do not need meat when we have each other, my sister."

Sacagawea didn't want her son to be afraid of his father's sleeping body in the doorway. "Oh look, Pompey. Papa is playing a sleeping game because it's very hot outside. Would you like to play a different kind of sleeping game with me until the sky is cool again?" Sacagawea tried to make her voice sound happy as she carried her son past his father and out of the room. She looked back at Otter Woman who motioned for them to go. Sacagawea challenged Pompey to a race to the grove of cottonwood trees by the river.

"I can beat you to the trees, Pompey, want to see?"

"No you can't!" Pompey ran with his little chest out and his arms and legs pumping. Sacagawea ran behind and let Pompey reach the grove before she did. Sacagawea collapsed into the cool grass under the trees.

"I won! I won!" Pompey cheered.

"You are a great warrior, my son." Sacagawea tried to catch her breath.



Pompey sat beside his mother and leaned against a giant tree. For a silent moment they looked across the glistening waters of the Missouri River and listened to the song of the trees dancing in the wind. Sacagawea gained peace from their gentle whispers.

Pompey, who couldn't stay silent for long, broke through the solitude with a pleading voice. "Mama, tell me again the story of your journey with Man-With-Red-Hair."

Sacagawea kissed Pompey on the forehead. "Oh, Pompey, how many times must I tell it? You know it so well, you can tell it to me now."

"But I like it better when you tell it. Please? I will be a quiet child if you tell it."

Sacagawea looked down at her handsome boy whose pleading eyes always made her catch her breath. Every time she looked at him her heart jumped with an aching kind of love she couldn't understand. Her son was her world. And she had a difficult time resisting his requests.

She sat Pompey on her lap and rocked him side to side in her arms. "If you close your eyes I will tell you. Will you close your eyes now?"

A delicate summer breeze wafted across the river causing the trees to murmur secrets to the sky. Its languid caress brushed against Pompey's eyelashes and he closed his eyes as his mother told the story of Man-With-Red-Hair and the Big Dog.

"I was your age when Otter Woman and I were stolen from our Shoshone parents while gathering food among the berries. I screamed for my mother. I screamed for my father. But when I screamed for my brothers and no one came, I knew that they could not hear me. And I was so very afraid..."

# Chapter 2

AD 1800

They stole my youth in the thirteenth autumn of my time. I felt the thunder of hooves and heard the crack of their [fire sticks](#) before I saw them. Puffs of smoke billowed from the horses' nostrils in the chilly autumn air. My mother put her hand over my little brother's mouth as she ran with him in her arms, away from the horses and the fires that flew from the popping sticks. Their fire forced people to the ground and made them close their eyes. I bolted to the other side of the river and watched as my mother disappeared into the trees and away from harm.

I escaped to nowhere with aching legs, not knowing where to go. Otter Woman followed behind me as I crisscrossed the river blindly, trying to outrun horses, hoping the fire sticks would not push me down. My lungs burned with a need for air, and my legs grew heavy with each step. I was a fast runner. My father was proud of my long strong legs that outran a boy my age last summer. But the horses' four legs were longer and stronger than mine.

A thick brown arm scooped me out of the river like a bear catching a fish. My shoulder cracked as the warrior threw me in front of him and draped me across the stallion's back. He shouted in words I did not recognize as I cried for my mother and father. I called for my brother, Cameahwait, but his bravery was no match for my captors' fire. Besides, he could not hear me. No one heard the cries of Otter Woman and me, two kidnapped [Shoshone](#) girls, whose voices rose to the sky and hid in the clouds.

The kidnapper pulled me up in front of him and yelled in my ear with words I could not understand. I sat in front of the young, boastful [warrior](#), and felt his hard chest press against my back. Through tears I stared at my blood-red fingers stained from picking [Chokecherries](#) and eating my fill. Would there be berries where they were taking me? I had never been far from home, away from the good medicine of my family and tribe.

That night they bound my hands together and tied ropes to my ankles so I would not run away. If I tried to speak to my sister, Otter Woman, they pulled on the ropes, making me stumble and bleed. After two days I did not speak or eat. When my captor, Soaring Eagle, tried to feed me, I spit my food at him.

He laughed at me and spoke unfamiliar words. His hands made signs that said I would eat when I was hungry enough.

He was right. By the fourth day I was too weak to walk, and this angered the warriors.

Otter Woman scolded me. “You must eat, sister. Do not die and leave me alone with these wicked ones.”

I looked at my sister’s pleading eyes. I could not leave her here alone. If she could eat, I could eat. When Soaring Eagle fed me the next day, I ate so fast I almost bit his fingers.

The warriors laughed and made signs that said, “Now she eats. Now she is happy to be one of us.”

But that was a lie. I was not happy. I was hungry. I wanted to run back home and feel my father’s arms around my shoulders and smell the scent of [sage](#) in my mother’s hair. I ate what they gave me, but it tasted like mud and stuck in my throat.

It was a long journey away from my home and my Shoshone family. We walked over 900 miles from our home near the Rocky Mountains to the plains of the Mandan tribes. I memorized every turn of the river. Someday I would escape and find my way back. My grandfather had taught me to be aware of every rock and tree. I did not feel lost because I knew exactly how to get home.

Many weeks later we arrived at the [Hidatsa](#) camp where stolen spirits from other tribes walked about with empty eyes. Different languages I did not understand filled my ears. Pale, [white men](#) laughed and drank in front of their lodge and whistled when we passed.

“Otter Woman, their faces are upside down.” I whispered. It was the first time I felt like laughing.

Otter Woman whispered in my ear. "Their skin is pale. They have not seen the sun. Perhaps that is why hair will not grow on the tops of their heads but only on their faces."

We were led through the village with our hands tied to ropes. Curious children ran beside us, and some threw rocks and sticks. The village was a strange looking place. I had always lived in my Father's tipi. These people lived in [houses made of earth](#) that looked like upside down baskets.

We were taken to the lodge of Buffalo Woman, Soaring Eagle's mother. Inside I stared at a [hole in the middle of the roof](#) for smoke to escape from the fire in the middle of the lodge. I gawked at the strange platforms along the walls, and at the horses on one side of the lodge that lived like people inside the upside down basket.

Buffalo Woman greeted her son with great joy and stared us up and down. She ran her hands down our arms and legs and laughed and smiled at Soaring Eagle. I was hungry but she put us to work immediately. We could not understand what she wanted, but Soaring Eagle explained in gestures what we were to do. While Otter Woman and I [tanned](#) the hide of an elk, we finally had the chance to talk to one another.

"Cameahwait will come for us soon." I whispered to Otter Woman.

She shook her head. "He has no fire. He cannot come. And it's too far. We have walked for too many suns."

I felt a tear escape from my eye. It landed on the sores on my wrists and I let out a small cry. "He will come."

Buffalo Woman was not unkind to us, but she was not warm like our mother. We worked hard from the time the morning said hello until our heads rested on the ground each night when Otter Woman and I would cuddle together on a soft [buffalo pallet](#).

"I can't remember what they look like." Tears spilled out of my eyes like rain.

"Who?" Otter Woman held me closer.

"Mother, Father, and our people. Their faces do not dance before me anymore."

“But you will never forget them, little sister. I will pray for Wolf to send them to you in a dream so you can remember.” Otter Woman comforted me as we fell to sleep, our muscles aching from a day of hauling water, gathering wood, and plowing the garden.

We worked hard and each day melted into the next until one morning we awoke to the river frozen hard by the cold. White snow, like tiny feathers, fell gently to the ground. Every day I walked to [the river](#) and looked for Cameahwait. “He will come,” I whispered to the wind. “One day I will see him again.”

But three winters passed and still no one came. Otter Woman and I whispered our stories in Shoshone so we would not forget. We wanted to tell our children about Wolf and Coyote, who once walked and talked like man.

“Coyote is a trickster,” Otter Woman whispered as my eyelids hung heavy over my eyes. I battled sleep as we lay on the outer edge of the lodge—the coldest spot in the room. Only the family was allowed to sleep in the middle by the fire. My back was to Otter Woman but we lay close together for warmth.

I nodded. “Wolf was creator. And all the Shoshone and animals respect him.”

Otter Woman stroked my hair. “That’s right. But [Coyote](#) was always up to no good and he was jealous of [Wolf](#) because the Shoshone liked Wolf more. So he came up with a plan to make the people hate Wolf by tricking him.”

I turned toward Otter Woman. “Yes. Because Wolf said that if anyone died, he would bring them back to life by shooting an arrow under them. But Coyote said that if people never die, there would be no place left on earth. He decided to teach Wolf a lesson, but Wolf was tired of Coyote always giving bad medicine, so he decided to teach Coyote a lesson, too.”

“Quiet.” Buffalo Woman, bundled snug and warm between her husband and her son, rolled over.

We waited to hear Buffalo Woman’s snoring. Otter Woman continued the story.

“Coyote came up with a plan. If Wolf took his advice, then the Shoshone people would hate Wolf, once and for all. A few days later Coyote ran to Wolf, his eyes wide with panic. Coyote’s son had been bitten by a rattlesnake. Coyote begged Wolf to bring his son back to life by shooting an arrow under him.”

I interrupted. “But Wolf reminded Coyote of his words: that people shouldn’t be brought back to life. And that is when death came to the earth.”

Otter Woman sighed. “And Coyote’s son was the first to die. But even though death came, Coyote couldn’t make the Shoshone hate Wolf and his wisdom and power.”

The fire crackled and we lay next to each other in silence listening to the snoring of Buffalo Woman’s family around us. A baby’s whimpers were silenced quickly by her sleepy mother. I was too tired to think anymore about home. I drifted off to sleep and dreamed of my mother whose face came smiling across the river so I would not forget.

##

The next day as Otter Woman and I worked side by side tending to the pumpkin plants in the [garden](#), we saw a man with an upside down face talking and smiling with Soaring Eagle. Later, whenever the man walked past he would make faces at us to make us giggle. It felt good to laugh, but why was this man paying so much attention to us?

Soaring Eagle walked past the [pumpkin patch](#). I gestured him to me. “Who is that man? Why does he keep talking to us and making us laugh?”

Soaring Eagle grinned. “He wants to know if you are promised to another.”

My heart raced. I was already promised to a [Shoshone](#) Warrior. But that did not matter now, did it?

“What is his name?” I could see the strange man doing a jig in the middle of the village, playing games like a child with Buffalo Woman’s grandchildren.

“We call him Bear-of-the-Forest. He comes from a place far away across many waters called France. In his own tongue they call him [Toussaint Charbonneau](#).”

The strange man with the hairy face looked up and waved at us and Soaring Eagle waved back. “He has offered a good price for you.”

“A price?” Was I nothing more than a horse to be traded?

“He is looking for wives.”

# Chapter 3

## Late Summer 1802

Soaring Eagle invited Charbonneau to sit at his fire. Buffalo Woman scowled when she saw them enter her lodge and ordered us to stay longer in the garden, plucking weeds and tilling the soil with digging sticks and [hoes made of buffalo bones](#). As long as we were together, Otter Woman and I were content.

While tending row after row of corn, beans, tobacco and squash, we told stories about the [prairie dogs](#) and [birds](#) that invaded our [garden](#). We laughed and talked of waiting for the river to freeze so we could slide back to our parents. We knew this was just in our imaginary world, but it made us happy to talk of it.

A thought as loud as a fire stick shot through my happy thoughts. “What if Soaring Eagle trades one of us away?” My heart beat fast and my hands shook as I dug my fingers into the soil to fill [a prairie dog burrow](#).

“Do not borrow such thoughts, sister. The Maker has heard our promise to always be together. We can trust Him.”

I nodded. That was true. The Maker knew everything about us and could read our thoughts and dreams. He knew we made a promise; He would not make us break it.

“Otter Woman! Come! Bring your sister.” Buffalo Woman’s shout sounded angry.

We dropped our tools and ran toward the lodge. Were we to be punished? I tried to remember what I may have done wrong, but fear made my mind slam shut like a trap.

“Yes, Buffalo Woman?” I stopped far from her fist.

“Come inside.” She grunted and entered the lodge.



Charbonneau's thick red eyebrows danced above his eyes when Otter Woman and I stepped into the lodge. He motioned for us to come forward where he and Soaring Eagle sat in the middle of the room by the fire, but we waited for Soaring Eagle's invitation before moving ahead.

"Come to the fire so that Charbonneau can look at you." Soaring Eagle took a drink out of a funny-shaped jar I recognized as holding drink that made men wobble.

Otter Woman and I stood beside him at the fire while Charbonneau winked at us and Buffalo Woman stomped about the lodge rearranging pelts and baskets. "You are taking away my two hardest workers. They are first in the field and last to go to bed at night. What will I do without them?"

Soaring Eagle roared: "They eat too much. When they are gone, you will not need to do as much work to feed them. I can get more women for your garden. Silence, woman. These are my slaves. This is my fire."

Buffalo Woman stood with her hands on her hips. This was her lodge, her fire. She allowed her son to bellow because he provided the meat and could hit her if he wanted. But she did not fear him.

Charbonneau took another drink from the jar and spoke. "Others like me are coming. There will be more of us. But I am different than they. I have lived among you a long time, have learned your ways and have watched these women at work and play. They please me. How much do you require for both of them?" Charbonneau spoke with French and Hidatsa words. Soaring Eagle understood because he had traded with the French fur traders for many winters.

"As slaves or as wives?"

"Is there a difference?" Charbonneau shrugged.

"Slaves have a different value." Soaring Eagle pretended not to care about the answer.

"Wives. I need wives. I want children and women to care for them and for me."

I understood the word “wives.” He said it in Hidatsa. Otter Woman and I frowned at one another and I felt a shiver crawl up my back and settle in my shoulders.

Soaring Eagle folded his arms. “They are very strong. Hard workers. One will do the work of two.”

Charbonneau put his lips to the drinking jar and tilted it back. He wiped his lips with the back of his hand, encrusted with mud. “I want them together. I’m a hunter and guide and not home much. I don’t want my woman alone. Besides, I have never seen one without the other. They are always together. Like twins. And the older one—she talks for the younger one.” His smile revealed crooked brown teeth with dark spaces like wolf dens in between.

I did not want a husband with dens in his mouth.

“Two wives will bring a higher price than two slaves.” Buffalo Woman mumbled.

Soaring Eagle nodded. “Two wives. More trade.” He slapped the jar. “More *midiadui*.” He lifted it to his lips and drank long and deep.

Charbonneau smiled. “Two. Two *midiadui* for two wives.”

Soaring Eagle shook his head. “Four. And two horses.”

Charbonneau scowled. “I have no horses, and only two whiskey.”

Soaring Eagle, drunk from the [whiskey](#), slapped at the ground. “We will play for wives. I win whiskey. You win wives.”

Buffalo Woman ran to the door to announce [the game](#). Her daughter-in-law brought a wooden bowl to the fire with various sticks and six colorful cube-shaped stones with different marks and colors on each side.

Soon Soaring Eagle’s lodge was full of warriors. Buffalo Woman pushed us to the far side of the room. “You will sleep here while I wait at Slow Horse’s lodge.” She threw down a buffalo blanket and motioned for us to lie down. We had not yet eaten supper or quenched our thirst.

After she left, Otter Woman and I, parched with thirst, slipped away to the river to wash ourselves and drink. Shouts of the men watching Soaring Eagle play the gambling game echoed through the night making my stomach quiver.

“I do not want to marry a man with an upside down face and a mouth like the den of a wolf.” I scrubbed the dirt from my face and washed my hair.

“But if we are wives we are no longer slaves.” Otter Woman spoke softly. I could barely hear her. “And Buffalo Woman can’t tell us what to do. We can have our own garden.”

“I do not believe you. I believe he will make us slaves.”

I saw Otter Woman shake her head in the moonlight. “He lives like Hidatsa. In a lodge. He knows Hidatsa ways. It would be our lodge. Our children.”

I floated in the river and watched the stars dance around the moon above me. I was only 16 winters on this earth. I did not feel old enough to be a wife and a mother. But at least I would have Otter Woman. And we would be free. I would not be seen as a slave in the village, but as Charbonneau’s woman.

Otter Woman swam beside me. “I wonder how long they will make such noise.”

I swam with her toward the bank. “Games last all night sometimes. Remember when Soft Shell Turtle gambled for Standing Flower? It lasted two days.”

We crept back to the lodge and slipped quietly back to our buffalo blanket. My eyes were tired but my mind was wide-awake wondering what it would be like to be a wife. I didn’t want to think about marrying a man named Charbonneau.

“Tell me the story of Wakinu, Otter Woman. My mind will not rest.”

We cuddled together like wolf pups in a deep dark den. Otter Woman began the story I’d heard many times as a child.

“Many winters past, the big [black bear](#), Wakini, overpowered the giant, strong, [grey grizzly](#) named Wakinu. Our people do not remember why this happened, but if you ask the black bears, they

remember, and they say that Wakini was doing what all black bears do, eating from an [ant hill](#). He was so busy eating, he did not notice Wakinu walk up to the ant hill until he stuck his paw in the ant hill, too.”

“That was rude of him.” I smiled in the darkness.

“Yes, quite rude.” Otter Woman giggled. She did not worry about being heard. The men in the lodge were laughing and shouting loud enough to drown out her words. “Of course, this made Wakini angry and he fought back because every good bear knows the rules.”

I yawned. “No bear touches another bear’s prey.”

“Exactly. The fight between the two bears was so fierce that no one could tell which bear was which. Grey and black hairs all blurred together. Wakini won the fight, and Wakinu, not only was defeated, but had to leave his tribe forever.”

I rolled to my back. “Because that is the Shoshone way. And no matter how much Wakinu cried—”

“And he cried many baskets of tears.” Otter Woman said.

“The Shoshone laws could not be broken. He had to leave the valley where he’d lived his entire life.”

I lay on my back thinking about how I had felt when I’d left the land of my parents. I knew how Wakinu must have felt. I didn’t cry as much now. But my throat still felt an ache like a rock I could not swallow when I thought of them.

Otter Woman finished the story. “Wakinu cried so much that when he left, he could not see where he was going because of his tears. He lost his way and accidentally walked all the way to the snow country where he fell into a snow bank. This caused him to stop crying, and when he wiped away his tears, all he could see was snow. Poor Wakinu was lost. He looked up at the sky and saw a broad white trail. He ran toward it and leapt into the sky. Animals hiding in the darkness looked up

and saw a grey bear walking on the Bridge of the Dead Souls on his way to the Eternal Hunting Grounds. The snow that fell from Wakinu's coat is [still in the sky](#) today."

I rolled back to my side. "Father used to tell us that story at night before we lay in our tipi, do you remember? He would teach us all the names of the stars."

"I remember."

"Do you think he wonders where we are? If we are yet wives with children of our own?"

"Of course he does, Sacagawea."

"Do you think Charbonneau will win the game and we will wake up as wives?"

"I do not know, beloved sister. I do not know." Otter Woman put her arms around me and buried her nose in my hair. "But I hope so."

## Chapter 4

“Wake up. You are Charbonneau’s women now.” Buffalo Woman was angry. She pulled off our blanket and pointed to the door. “You will go to Sitting Owl’s lodge and wait.”

“What is it that we wait for?” I scurried behind Otter Woman toward Sitting Owl’s lodge.

Otter Woman slowed and waited for me to catch up. “I don’t know. But we will learn in time.”

Inside the lodge, some of the village women greeted us with giggles.

“We are here to help prepare the feast you will take to Charbonneau’s lodge.” Hawk Dancer showed us to our place at the fire.

Some of the women gave us gifts. My favorite was a small pot I could see my face in. “I traded this to a Frenchman for four [white weasel pelts](#).” Red Blossom smiled. “But I do not have my own lodge yet and you need it more than I do.”

“Thank you, Red Blossom. You have always been kind to us. I have long admired your white weasel pelts.” Otter Woman embraced her friend as I looked about the lodge at all the women I had come to know as my clan.

“Buffalo Woman did not come.” I spoke the words aloud without realizing.

“Even though she acted like an angry grizzly, she was like a mother to us,” Otter Woman whispered.

“She was not like a mother to me.” I disagreed with Otter Woman. “But I will not let bitter roots grow.”

The rest of the day we laughed and cooked with our clan women. Corn and beans, buffalo meat and squash were boiled in separate clay cooking pots.

That evening, we took the food we prepared to Charbonneau's lodge and shared our first meal as a family. Eating this meal together in Charbonneau's lodge meant [we were now married](#). We were no longer slaves.

We were Charbonneau's women.

##

### September 1804

"Why do you think the men are so long at Soaring Eagle's fire?" I steered baby Toussaint, Otter Woman's child, away from the cooking pot as he toddled about the lodge. I smiled at the funny way he stumbled to his mother and pulled on her braids.

Otter Woman handed him a blueberry. "I heard Charbonneau say many white men in a boat are coming to us on the river."

I laughed. "How can many men fit in one boat?" The only boats I knew were the [round buffalo skin boats](#) we [used to cross the river](#). Only a few men could fit.

Otter Woman put young Toussaint [on her back](#) and busied herself sweeping ashes out of our lodge. "Perhaps I misunderstood. You know our husband's speech is poor."

I nodded and felt the knot on my cheek where he had hit me for misunderstanding him the night before. He had asked for a blanket and I had handed him a bowl. "But why would our husband hold such a large meeting? The other men laugh at him. Especially the Black Mouths."

Otter Woman tidied our lodge as I stirred the buffalo simmering on the fire. Baby Toussaint was already asleep on his mother's back. "We will know soon enough."

I patted my stomach. "Soon I will carry this one on my back instead of my front."

Otter Woman laughed. "At least they are smaller when you carry them in front. He gets heavier every day."

"I think of our mother more now that I am going to be one." I rubbed my belly and felt the baby kick. "I think he will be a mighty warrior."

Otter Woman smiled. "I can hardly wait to meet him."

The sounds of shouting voices woke up baby Toussaint. The [Black Mouths](#) were shouting orders at the women of the village. One of them entered our lodge waving a gun.

"Visitors coming for meeting about the Boat-of-Many-Men." He pointed the gun at Otter Woman. "You, fat one. Help clean yard."

He pointed at me. "You. Charbonneau will tell you what to do."

Otter Woman left the lodge with baby Toussaint crying on her back. I could hear women sobbing and the loud voices of the Black Mouths bullying them to prepare for the Boat-of-Many-Men.

Quickly, I straightened up our already tidy lodge. Otter Woman and I were proud of our own home and it was one of the cleanest in the village. That is, until Charbonneau came home from a hunt.

"Sacagawea!" Charbonneau rushed into the lodge. "Furs. Get them and bring them to the Chief's lodge."

I went to the corner where Charbonneau's [furs were piled high](#). How many should I bring? If I took too few, Charbonneau would be angry and hit me. I decided to take as many as I could carry on my back. If there were many men coming, they may want many furs.

I carried the furs into Chief One Eye's lodge where Buffalo Woman and her two new slaves were preparing buffalo stew. She pointed to a place beside the fire to place the furs.

"Would you like me to help you?" I stood a fair distance behind her and spoke softly.

She nodded and pointed to the [dried squash](#). I knew she wanted me to cook it with some beans as I had done many times as her slave. I carried the cooking pot to the river for water and on my way met Charbonneau whose face was red from running.

"They're at the [Mandan village](#)."

He didn't stop but ran past me with his short legs to Chief One Eye's lodge.



I felt my baby kick. “You are excited to see this [Boat-of-Many-Men](#), too, aren’t you?” I filled my pot with water. As I lifted it to my shoulder I looked down the river and wondered how much longer it would be before I could see them.

A wolf’s howl drifted through the crisp autumn air and the hair on my arms stood proud. I felt a shiver crawl up my spine the same as it did when the Hidatsa came to steal me from my mother. I hurried back to the lodge and on the way felt my baby move again. “So you feel it too? I know, I know, little one. The Boat-of-Many-Men will change our lives. For your sake, I hope it is good medicine.”

Otter Woman and I helped the village women prepare for visitors. Before I put the squash in the cooking pot, the village hummed with the voices of visiting tribes and their leaders who spilled into Chief One Eye’s lodge and [sat at his fire](#). Because I helped Buffalo Woman, I was able to hear their words.

“All white men trade. They want furs. Charbonneau has brought them.” One of the Black Mouths sat beside the fire and pointed to the [tall stack of pelts](#) I’d carried in.

“Not these white men. They look for big waters.” Charbonneau spoke in broken Hidatsa and some of the visiting men snickered.

“They have made an alliance with our enemy the [Arikaras](#). They will make war against us. We must be ready.” Chief One Eye was suspicious of the visitors.

Charbonneau shook his head. “No, not war. Trade. Exploration. They bring [gifts](#).”

But Charbonneau’s reputation was not respected. Many of the chiefs did not agree and argued into the next morning about the Boat-of-Many-Men. The next morning, while children played in the spotless courtyard, the men snored loudly in Chief One Eye’s lodge.

While collecting more water at the river, I overheard two young warriors talking as they walked along the line of cottonwoods at the water’s frosty edge.

“They bring a blanket called a flag and speak of a [White Father](#) many long waters away who says this land is his.”

“How do you know this?” The younger warrior trailed the older.

“I watched with eyes they could not see.”

##

Otter Woman and I helped our husband, Charbonneau take furs to the Mandan village of Mitutanka for trade. As we loaded our bags for the journey home, a group of young children ran through the village with important news.

“They’re coming! We can see them! The Boat-of-Many-Men draws near!”

Otter Woman and I dropped our parcels and ran to the river. Others ran with us, shouting and rejoicing at the strangers’ long-awaited arrival. When we reached a bluff overlooking the river, I saw a boat as big as my lodge, and stared at the many men who moved it with poles and walked along its back.

Along the edge of the river ran a [large black dog](#). At first I thought he was a bear. But when I heard him bark and watched him chase a rabbit, I knew he was wolf’s brother.

That is also when I saw Man-With-Red-Hair and a [giant dark man](#) with black paint that would not come off his skin.

“Why is that man covered in paint?” I wondered aloud. “And why is the other man’s hair as red as our fire?”

**October 26, 1804**

We did not get to stay in the village of Mitutanka to watch the white men at their camp. The leaves were falling from the cottonwoods and frost covered the earth’s floor like ground meal sprinkled into a pot of stew. We had much to do in preparation for the season of snow and ice.

Charbonneau's French-speaking friend, Jessaume, came to our lodge and told us about the Boat-of-Many-Men camping in a corn field across the river. His voice sounded excited when he told us how Man-With-Red-Hair came to the village asking questions.

"When he was offered food, he did not take it." Jessaume clucked his tongue in disapproval. "But he said his stomach was not well. We forgave him this insult and believed he was not our enemy."

"Did you learn where they are going?" Charbonneau was impatient for news.

"They are going up the river to find horses. I told them about you and your women who speak the language of the Shoshone. They come tomorrow to meet Chief One Eye."

"Why would they take women on such a journey?" Charbonneau scowled. "They only get in the way."

"Your women are the only ones who know the language of the Shoshone. And the Boat-of-Many-Men need horses for their journey to the big waters."

Charbonneau narrowed his eyes and stared at Otter Woman and me. I looked down at the tiny moccasins I was decorating with porcupine quills the color of blueberries. I had much to get ready for my baby.

But my heart beat wild with hope and I stared at my hands to hide my smile. Could it be true? Would the river take me home again? Thoughts raced through my mind faster than baby Toussaint's little feet running from his mother.

Shouts interrupted my thoughts and grew louder in the village as they announced the arrival of Man-With-Red-Hair at the edge of the river. A young warrior poked his head inside our lodge.

"Man-With-Red-Hair is at the river to smoke pipe. You come now."

At the river the Arikara chief sat across from the Mandan and Hidatsa chiefs. Jessaume sat between them and Man-With-Red-Hair as interpreter. When Man-With-Red-Hair and his tribe gave

Chief One Eye silver medals and blankets he called flags, the stubborn leader would not receive them.

“They are bad medicine to our people and our children.”

Man-With-Red-Hair gave a speech that spoke of a powerful United States of America army. Chief One Eye shook his head in disagreement.

“We are a powerful people. More powerful than the Great White Father you cannot see. We are more powerful than any nation on the earth.”

But the Mandan Chief, Big White, welcomed the Boat-of-Many-Men to his land and promised them friendship. “If we eat, you will eat. If we starve, you will starve.” He pointed across the river where the strangers had made camp. “You build your village there. Is good for us.”

I wished that Chief One Eye welcomed these strangers. I wanted [that flag](#) striped the colors of red birds and snow, and trimmed with a corner sky full of stars. I did not know what it meant, but I could tell it had powerful medicine for Man-With-Red-Hair. He held it proudly like a warrior holds his lance.

That is when I knew that somehow I would get close enough to touch that colorful blanket so my baby would know of its great powers.

I would be a friend to Man-With-Red-Hair whose Boat-of-Many-Men would take me back home.

And into the arms of my mother again.

# Chapter 5

Every day when Charbonneau went to where Man-With-Red-Hair was building a village, I went with him to be near them and hear the words I did not understand. The man they called York, whose skin is the color of mud, was as big as a tree and able to carry the wood of two men. He was kind and talked to me in gestures. His smile shone bright like the morning sun peeking through the cracks in the walls of my lodge.

I showed him where to find the secret [cranberry bush](#) that Otter Woman and I found. Even though it was cold, its berries lasted through the time of snow. We always left plenty for our brothers, bird and [elk](#), but we knew they did not mind sharing with our new friends. I made motions to York to explain not to eat too many and he laughed at me. He would not laugh if he ate more than he should and his belly screamed at him.

The men from the Boat-of-Many-Men, whom the Mandan called “Pretty People,” built their village with trees. They did not shape them with soil like our lodges. They [made a wall with logs](#) standing side by side, straight and tall around their houses in the shape of an arrow.

“Why do they hide behind tall trees?” I babbled each night in our lodge and asked questions about everything I saw. The Pretty People’s ways were strange to me and I wanted to understand.

But my curiosity made Charbonneau angry. “You ask too many questions. You are a stupid woman and do not need to know.”

Otter Woman was more patient. “It is so they can hide from their enemies.”

“Who are their enemies?” Even though Charbonneau didn’t like my questions I asked them anyway.

“Their enemies are our enemies: the [Arikaras](#) and the [Teton Sioux](#).”

There was another man at Fort Mandan called [Lewis](#). He had red hair but it was not as bright as my favorite, Man-With-Red-Hair, whom the Pretty People called Captain Clark. Lewis stared all

day at [scratches he made on papers](#). He opened small boxes called books. Otter Woman told me these books speak to him. I thought it had to be good medicine to hear a box speak. I wanted to learn how to listen, too. I stood quietly beside him and watched him scratch first his papers and then his head. He asked the names of things and I told him the Hidatsa name.

First I told Jessaume ,who told Charbonneau in French, who told Lewis in English.

When I tried to tell the Shoshone names of things, Charbonneau punished me.

“No, you stupid female. They want Hidatsa words.” Charbonneau slapped me and the man named Lewis turned and grabbed Charbonneau by the arm.

“You will not hit this woman.” I know Lewis said this because Jessaume told me so.

Charbonneau backed off and took Otter Woman to the village without me. Lewis invited me to sit beside him and explain the use of different plants. I talked with my hands when Jessaume couldn't understand. I only said the [Hidatsa name](#) and taught him which plants are food and which are medicine. But I knew Shoshone names, too. Could things have more than one name? What if Shoshone was the correct one and Hidatsa was not?

Weeks later when the white men finished making the village they invited us into their houses that were [hooked together side by side](#). The rooms smelled like a forest of cottonwood, elm and ash. There was no dirt on the floor. They covered the ground with [slices of the trees](#) rubbed smooth that felt like polished river stones under my feet. I asked Charbonneau if we could put sliced wood on the ground in our lodge and he didn't answer. I decided that Otter Woman and I would slice the wood and polish it ourselves.

One evening when I came home from visiting the man named Lewis and his talking boxes, I found Otter Woman singing a crying song as she rocked Toussaint on her bed.

“What is it sister? Why so many tears? Is Toussaint ill?”

Otter Woman shook her head and laid her son on the bed before turning to embrace me.

I felt her tears water my face. “You are scaring me, Otter Woman. Tell me why you weep.”

We settled ourselves by the fire and I dried her tears with my hands.

“Charbonneau is taking you to live at Fort Mandan. I will be alone.”

“Why must I live at Fort Mandan?”

Before Otter Woman could answer, our husband came home and interrupted us.

“I am hungry. Feed me.” He plopped down beside the fire.

I sat on the bed and listened to Charbonneau smack his lips and eat. He rarely spoke to us because he could not speak Hidatsa very well, but on this night, I wished my husband could find his tongue for words instead of food. I needed to know why I had to leave my sister and her little son, Toussaint.

Shouts and cries floated into the lodge interrupting the sound of Charbonneau’s slurping. Otter Woman and I ran out to the courtyard to see why. Everyone pointed to the sky where [bright lights danced on the tops of the trees](#). Women moaned in fear but I was fascinated. My baby jumped in my stomach when I described what I saw.

“It is a herd of buffalo stampeding towards the sky to escape the fury of Coyote. Spirit horses lead them to our Maker. Oh, the colors, little one! Like new grass and blossoms on the stalks of berry trees. It is a dazzling and terrifying sight, but we must have courage. The sky is telling us there are things greater than ourselves that we must be willing to learn. Be brave, little warrior.”

##

Otter Woman was right. Charbonneau took me to live with him at Fort Mandan and left her and baby Toussaint behind in our Hidatsa village. I shared a small room at Fort Mandan with Charbonneau, York and Jessaume. Every day I stole away to the river and waited for Otter Woman to come with baby Toussaint so we could be together. After the river froze, she left Toussaint with

Red Blossom in the village at night and crept into my bed. We snuggled and slept together without anyone knowing except for York, who never gave away our secret.

But when Man-With-Red-Hair found the gate unlocked, he made a rule that no one could leave the fort or come in at night. I missed Otter Woman and it was getting too cold to stand in the wind at the river and wait to see her.

But before the river froze, people from our village came to watch York and the “Pretty People” [march in lines and practice shooting](#). I kept busy interpreting what the Indians said to Lewis and Man-With-Red-Hair. Lewis asked questions and Jessaume told Charbonneau what he said and my husband told me. I answered his questions by telling Charbonneau, who told Jessaume in French, who told Lewis and Man-With-Red-Hair in English. Sometimes Jessaume and Charbonneau fought over which word to use but I sensed that Jessaume understood me better.

I could tell by the scowls on their faces that York and Lewis did not like Charbonneau. But Man-With-Red-Hair laughed at him. I could not tell if he liked him or not. It was easy for me to know how I felt. I did not like Charbonneau who was cruel towards me. But what could I do? I was his wife and he was my husband. The child I carried in my belly was his. We were a family. A woman was not her own. Her husband owned her. Like a slave.

One late afternoon after I spent a long day interpreting for Soaring Eagle and Man-With-Red-Hair, I yawned. Man-With-Red-Hair looked at me and pointed to the bunk next to the wall. “Janey looks tired.” He gestured for me to lie down.

That was my new name: Janey. Man-With-Red-Hair gave it to me and York and the other Pretty People called me this, too. I liked my new name. It sounded like sweet nectar in their mouths. Not like when Buffalo Woman or Charbonneau spoke my name with resentment and scorn.

I lay on the bunk but I could not sleep. I wanted to hear everything the men were saying.

Soaring Eagle was upset. “Why must the Pretty People travel to the [big waters](#) where there are no buffalo?” He did not understand these people, but he liked them and did not want them to



leave. He spread ashes from the fireplace on the floor and drew pictures of [mountains](#) that stood between the big waters and the Shoshone lands. Man-With-Red-Hair and Lewis did not look happy when they scanned the picture on the floor.

I clucked my tongue and called the [big black dog](#) to me. Man-With-Red-Hair said his name was Seaman. I asked Jessaume what is meant by such a name. (I could not ask Charbonneau because he would not answer.)

“One who rides on many waters,” Jessaume said.

I imagined this enormous dog riding on the waters. I wondered if he rode in a Boat-of-Many-Men or if he strolled atop the waters with his great webbed feet. I had seen him swim with the swiftness of a duck chasing brothers muskrat and beaver.

Seaman lay on the floor by my bed and I crawled down and curled up next to him. His fur was thick and comforting like a buffalo blanket.

I whispered to him in Shoshone. “Let us be friends, Seaman. We can keep each other warm.” He gave a heavy sigh and put his giant head on his paws but he did not sleep. He kept watch of all that went on before him like a great warrior guarding his clan.

I did not mean to sleep, but realized I had dozed off when strange pleasant sounds came drifting into my dreams. I opened my eyes to see a man named [Peter](#) pulling a stick across [tiny ropes on a box](#) that created voices like singing birds. These sounds, [called music](#), made York stomp and twirl around the room. Seaman sat up and barked and wagged his tail. I crawled into the back corner of the bunk and watched York clap his hands, stamp his feet and sing. I had never before seen this kind of dancing or [heard such a happy song](#). I pulled my knees to my chest and rocked back and forth to the rhythm of York’s feet. He looked up and caught me staring at him. He grinned with those bright teeth and sang my new name: “Janey.” I hid my face in my knees and listened to all of them sing something about Janey.

No one had ever sung my name before.

Now I was no longer just Charbonneau's woman.

Now my name was Janey.

And I had a song.

# Chapter 6

**December 1804**

The Hidatsa and Mandans crossed the frozen river with baskets filled with corn and gave it to [John Shields](#). The Pretty People called him “Blacksmith.” In a [little house with no walls](#), he sharpened knives, made sharp arrow points, and tools for scraping hides. They came each day for [war axes](#), [knives](#), and garden tools. Warriors brought their broken rifles to be fixed. Blacksmith did not keep the [corn](#) they gave him. He shared it with everyone who lived at the fort. Some nights it was all we had for food.

Even though it was cold, I liked watching Blacksmith. I wrapped myself in a buffalo blanket and stood at the edge of the little house to watch him turn the red hot iron in the fire and strike it with a hammer. His pounding turned the glowing iron into sharp knives and tools. When he was finished, he put the hot tools in a pot of water to cool. Even when someone’s knife was finished they did not go home. They stayed and watched their neighbors’ tools being made. We did not want to do our work when Blacksmith did his magic.

The children visited York every day and rubbed his thick black hair. They licked their fingers to rub the color off his skin and called him “burnt man.” He teased the children and growled like a bear to scare them. They ran away and York chased them. I liked watching him play. Seaman chased York and protected the children from the “bear.” If one fell, he stood over them until they got back up again. That is why I called Seaman “mama dog.” He was like a protective mother when the children came to play.

Seaman was Lewis’s dog, but everyone shared him because Seaman loved people. The big dog took care of me. When I made moccasins, he sat beside me. When I hunted and dug [roots](#), he came with me and lifted his leg to mark the path. “Stay away from my territory, I’m warning you.” This was the message he left everywhere we went.

Before the cold winds came, and the snow was deep, I sat by the fire with Seaman in the evenings and picked the [thorns](#) out of his thick, long coat and paws. This was not good land for such a beast to play. Sometimes I heard him cry out in pain while chasing a rabbit. He came to me when he was hurt and I soothed his wounds with herbs. Whenever I caught a mouse or [shrew](#) in the fort, I saved it for my friend, Seaman. The Pretty People wondered why he liked me so much. But I knew it was because of the treats I gathered for him.

Sometimes Lewis allowed Seaman to sleep with me and keep me warm. Charbonneau slept on the bed and I made a pallet of buffalo furs for Seaman and myself on the floor by the fire. One night while I was dreaming of my parents, a loud explosion scared everyone awake. The men grabbed their guns and ran toward the doors of the Fort. Charbonneau laughed and made fun of them.

“Scared of an exploding tree!” He pointed at Man-With-Red-Hair and laughed.

“An exploding tree?” Man-With-Red-Hair did not smile.

“The [Cottonwoods](#) are full of water. They explode with the cold temperatures. Stupid Americans.” Charbonneau laughed and went back to his bunk. I watched Lewis step into his room and find his papers to scratch on them before he shut his door. Seaman nudged my hand to go back to the pallet and lie down. I was tired and my belly was getting heavy from my growing child. I did not argue. I lay down with the big warm dog and slept.

The next day Seaman went hunting with [George Drouillard](#), the great hunter of the Pretty Faces. I stayed at the fort and helped Lewis take care of the sick Hidatsas and Mandans that brought food in exchange for good medicine. Every morning they lined up at Lewis’ door carrying vegetables and meat which our stomachs needed as we had little food.

But when Red Blossom brought her son to Lewis with [black toes](#), I could not stay in the room while the captain cut them off. I took Red Blossom to my little room and we held one another as her child screamed in agony. When it was over, Lewis carried the sobbing boy to us in his arms

and I saw tears on the Captain's cheeks. I had never seen a warrior cry over a child before. My heart grew soft for him that day.

Lewis handed him to Red Blossom. "He will stay with us until he is well. Can you attend to him, Sacagawea?"

Charbonneau interpreted for me and I repeated what he said to Red Blossom. She nodded.

"Can his mother stay here with me? She will take up little room and can sleep with me on the floor."

Charbonneau asked Lewis and he nodded. I was sad for Red Blossom's son. But I was glad Red Blossom could stay. I knew it was nearing my time to have a baby of my own and I was happy to have another mother near.

"Red Blossom, when it is my time, will you promise to bring Otter Woman to me?"

She agreed.

I was worried. "How will I know it is my time?"

"You will know. You will have no doubts when it comes."

Two weeks later my time came. Red Blossom was right. I knew when it was time. The discomfort stampeded through my body like a herd of frightened buffalo. For hours I drifted in and out of sleep and ache and yet, my baby would not come.

"Otter Woman!" I cried for my sister. Why wasn't she here? I did not want to do this alone.

The sunlight faded and I heard women's voices in the dark and Red Blossom singing low and soft. Someone bathed my face. Sleep took me again but when I awakened Otter Woman's voice was in the room.

"Remember mother Wolf, who makes no complaint when her children are born."

"I am not mother Wolf!" I screamed in agony and fear. How did my own mother bear it?

Otter Woman stood over me. "Remember your ancestors, Sacagawea. They are watching you."

A man's voice, Jessaume's, drifted into my room. I heard him say "rattlesnake" in French. I knew this word because Charbonneau taught it to me when we heard its song in the grass. Then I heard Jessaume say "drink" and Lewis say "yes." I did not hear Charbonneau's voice. Where was my husband?

Jessaume held a cup to my lips. "Drink, Janey. The baby will be here soon."

I choked on the [rattle mixture](#) and fell back on my pallet with Hidatsa women around me, singing, burning sage, and praying to our Creator.

Where was Man-With-Red-Hair? If he were near he would comfort me.

"Captain Clark is on a hunt, little sister. He will be here soon." Otter Woman tried to assure me but I did not calm.

A few minutes later, out of the fog of labor, I heard a baby's cry.

"Is that my child?" My eyes would not open and my arms were too heavy to reach for him.

Otter Woman laid him on my chest. "He is a strong one, sister. You did well."

"His head is not round." I worried about how the [shape of his head](#) felt in my hands, all pointed and misshaped.

"It will be soon. Give it time."

I could not speak anymore. My eyes would not stay open. My work was done. Now I could sleep.

##

"His name is Jean-Baptiste." I opened my eyes to see Charbonneau leaning over me and my son. "That is a good French name."

I did not know my heart could grow so large with love. I counted my baby's fingers and marveled at his tiny nails. I kissed his smooth forehead and smoothed his dark hair with my fingers. His tiny lips parted in a slight smile and I admired his long dark eyelashes. He was the most perfect

baby I had ever seen. I hoped Otter Woman would not be offended that my child—my [\*makidaksi\*](#), my [\*ohmaa\*](#)--was superior in every way.



All the Pretty Faces came to see my son. I let Man-With-Red-Hair and Captain Lewis hold him. In York's arms Jean-Baptiste looked like a tiny chipmunk. I did not let anyone else hold him. I was selfish with my firstborn son. I could not get enough of how he felt sleeping in my arms.

I was proud to be a [mother](#) of a white man's child. Not because of his skin, but because we would be treated with respect. I did not like the way of things. It was not right that one man's skin was [treated with more kindness](#) than another's. But I wanted the best for my son. I knew that he would need to be part of the white man's world to be a great warrior.

Now I was no longer only Charbonneau's woman. I was not only Janey. Now I was someone's mother. I had never felt this important before. Now I knew my reason for walking this earth: to raise Jean-Baptiste to be a great man. I didn't want him to be like Charbonneau. I wanted him to be like Man-With-Red-Hair, tall and sure of himself. And kind. I would teach my son the kindness of the Pretty Faces. I would tell him not to hit a woman and to treat all people fairly. I would teach him not to steal another woman's child. These were things I was put on this earth to teach my son.

I made myself get out of bed and walk the second day. I did not want the Pretty Faces to think I was too weak to travel with them on the Great Journey. I worked hard to be part of their tribe.

But my foolish husband did not. He refused to work as hard as the other men.

"I'm an interpreter not a laborer! I will not be made to do what the other men do. My position carries with it special privileges."

But Man-With-Red-Hair did not agree and told us that if Charbonneau did not work, he could not be part of the [Pretty Faces tribe](#). We were told to leave the fort and had to move back to the village with Otter Woman and baby Toussaint. I was happy to see my sister and little nephew, but I was angry with Charbonneau. I would miss Man-With-Red-Hair, my friend, Seaman, and York. I would miss helping Lewis each day with the papers he scratched.

I had never stood up to my husband before, but now I was a mother. Now I had to fight not for only myself, but also for my son.



“Because you are lazy I will not see my people. Because you are lazy my people will not meet Jean-Baptiste and love him as I do. You are not a great warrior. I am ashamed to be your wife.” I stomped about the lodge shaking my fist at my husband.

Charbonneau had never seen me angry. He had never seen me stand up to him. I knew with his son in my arms he would not strike me.

He looked at the fire that had no pot. “I’m hungry. Why is there no food ready?”

I knew what I must do. That is why I said it.

“You will not eat at my fire until you make good medicine with the Pretty Faces.”

And I pointed to the door.

# Chapter 7

**March 1805**

When Seaman came home with a baby rabbit, I knew it was the Time of New Life. The trees grew tiny leaves, new green grass peeked out from under the snow, and baby gnats annoyed the men as they worked [digging out canoes](#) for their journey to the big waters.

I was excited and happy. Charbonneau had apologized to Man-With-Red-Hair four days after I sent him away from my fire. [Captain Lewis agreed](#) to take us on the voyage with him and made Charbonneau scratch his name on a paper. Now he had to work as hard as I did, tanning the buffalo hides we would use to protect our food from rain and keep us warm. He worked beside the Pretty People making [skin boats](#), [moccasins](#) and [clothing](#) from the hides we tanned. He helped us make canoes from cottonwood trees, and [tarpaulins](#) and tents from hides. He even helped me make his [leggings](#). When he was working hard, his moods were kinder. He was too tired to be mean.

Man-With-Red-Hair played with Jean-Baptiste every day. When my baby learned to smile, he named him Pompey, which meant “dancing boy” in English. He liked the way Pompey kicked his legs whenever anyone played with him. I carried Pompey [on my back](#) while I worked and felt his little fists grab on to my braids. The Pretty People talked to him whenever they passed by. Seaman rarely left my side and if I sat down to work, he washed Pompey’s face with his enormous tongue. If Pompey cried, [Seaman ran to us](#) until I quieted him.

“He’s such a happy baby and rarely cries.” Captain Lewis cooed and let Pompey tug on his nose. “I wish I could be this happy.”

“No cry.” I pointed to all the men. “Play all day.” I smiled at Captain Lewis.

He nodded. “Yes. And I can’t imagine this fort without him.”

For weeks I helped Lewis with the things he wanted to send back to Father Jefferson in Washington. We filled twenty-five wooden boxes with skins, [antlers](#), and skeletons of animals that

Father [Jefferson had never seen](#), such as [prairie wolves](#), [mule deer](#), [prairie squirrels](#) and [rams](#). We sent him a buffalo robe and the skin of a [yellow bear](#). Lewis also sent him dead insects, plants, [Mandan bows](#), arrows and [cooking pots](#). We carefully packed a [painted buffalo robe](#) that told the story of the war between the Sioux and Arikaras against the Mandans. I did not know why [Father Jefferson](#) would want such things, but Lewis said he would like them. “Father Jefferson is a curious man.”

We also put living animals Lewis called “prairie dogs” in a cage and filled two other cages with [magpies](#) and [prairie hens](#). [Maps](#), stories about the different tribes [he had met](#), and [weather charts](#) were added to the boxes but I didn’t understand the marks on the papers. We packed all these things on the [Keelboat](#) to go back to St. Louis because Man-With-Red-Hair said the Boat-With-Many-Men was too big to take to the big waters.

[Six canoes](#) and [two pirogues](#) would carry all our supplies and us to the Shoshone where we would trade for horses to cross the mountains. Thinking of seeing my family again made my heart leap in my chest and my hands flutter like the gnats in my stomach.

There were many things that Captain Lewis needed to take with him in the pirogue: [magical things](#) that Lewis used to look at the sky, his little [box for scratching on papers](#), the bundle he called journals, and all the other papers he kept in a wooden box. We also packed gunpowder, [medicine](#), food and the [poles](#) and [hides](#) for our tent. I made Pompey a new [cradleboard](#) for the journey. I could hardly sleep the night before it was time to say good-bye to the Hidatsas and find my way home.

### **April 7, 1805**

We said goodbye to [Newman](#), [Reed](#), [Warfington](#) and six others who left on the keelboat to take the [treasures](#) to St. Louis so they could be taken to Washington and Father Jefferson.

“Afraid, Sioux?” I asked Man-With-Red-Hair.

“Yes, I am, Janey. I’m worried the Sioux may stop their journey. Those men are in my prayers.” He spoke to me with his hands.

On a shiny little stone in Lewis’s pocket, was a tiny black scratch he called “number four.” When the long stick was on the top scratch and the little stick was on the “four” scratch, we put our canoes in the water and said goodbye to Fort Mandan. Otter Woman stood on the bank with baby Toussaint and waved until I could see her no more. I was sad to leave her but I was eager to follow the river home to my mother and father.



“I always knew [the river](#) would take me home, Pompey. I always knew.”

Seaman started the journey riding at the front of the boat in front of Captain Lewis in the [pirogue](#), but it wasn’t long until he jumped into the water and ran beside us on the shore, chasing rabbits and birds. I, too, sat in the captains’ boat. It was my job to watch for signs on the river that we were going to the land of my parents.

We did not go far that first day before we stopped for the night. The captains put me in charge of raising our tipi for sleeping. Charbonneau and I were invited to sleep [inside](#) with the captains, Drouillard, and Seaman. I think it was because Man-With-Red-Hair wanted to be near Pompey. And so did the big black dog. He slept by the door and kept guard.

York helped me put up twelve poles tied together at the top and cover them with buffalo hides. It was a cozy home for us, away from the [mosquitoes](#). I think Charbonneau's snoring scared them away.

In the evenings if the weather was good, we sat at the fire outdoors and listened to Peter play his fiddle. Sometimes the Pretty People sang songs that comforted Pompey who fell to sleep while I nursed him. Even Charbonneau seemed happy to be on this journey, and treated our traveling crew to [boudin blanc](#), what Man-With-Red-Hair called "white pudding." He made sausage from buffalo intestines and buffalo meat, mixed with flour and fried it in bear grease. The Pretty People loved this treat. I was proud of him when he cooked. He got many happy words. Captain Lewis praised my husband and ate too much of the *boudin blanc*. I knew this was good medicine for Charbonneau.

The first few weeks of our journey were the most pleasant. The weather was good, and we took turns walking along side the boats. The men hunted meat but I hunted berries, nuts and roots. Man-With-Red-Hair was happy that I found many things for them to eat. He told Charbonneau I kept the Pretty People healthier and that was another good reason to bring me along on the journey. I taught Captain Lewis the names of my roots, and he scratched a word called "[artichoke](#)" in the papers he called a journal when I taught him how to eat them:

*"...the flavor of this root resembles that of the Jerusalem Artichoke, and the stalk of the weed which produces it is also similar, though both the root and stalk are much smaller than the Jerusalem Artichoke. The root is white and of an ovate form, from one to three inches in*

*length and usually about the size of a man's finger. One stalk produces from two to four, and sometimes six of these roots.” -- Meriwether Lewis, [April 9, 1805](#)*

The roots and nuts I found were hidden and not as easy to find as the buffalo. They did not fear us and walked among us along the shores of the great river that Clark named “Missouri.” When Captain Lewis, Seaman and I were walking one afternoon, a buffalo calf got separated from his mother and decided that Captain Lewis was his mama. The crew and I laughed as the little calf followed our Captain.

“He thinks Seaman is a calf,” I said to Pompey.

I teased Lewis and called him “Buffalo Mother.” He did not understand my words, but Drouillard told the Pretty People what I’d said and they laughed, too.

That night, Captain Lewis wrote in his journal and read it to Drouillard who read it to me:

*“...walking on shore this evening I met with a buffalo calf which attached itself to me and continued to follow close at my heels until I embarked and left it. It appeared alarmed at my dog which was probably the cause of it's so readily attaching itself to me.” –Meriwether Lewis, [April 22, 1805](#).*

It was a cold and windy day, and our boats had a difficult time making it up the river. The wind blew with freedom with few trees to stop it. Everywhere we looked were herds of elk, deer and antelope. Buffalo covered the [land-without-an-end](#) as far as we could see and [fat beaver](#) swam among our boats, curious at the long logs we floated upon.

Coyote chased the buffalo calves and the mothers defended their babies. I thought about Pompey and what I would do to defend him. In my heart I hoped the mothers would win even though I knew Coyote needed to eat, too.

“Eat a bull.” I whispered the prayer but knew that the vulnerable mothers and calves were easier for Coyote and Wolf to capture.

I pointed out the coyotes and wolves to Captain Lewis. Wherever the buffalo grazed, the coyotes and wolves were with them.

“Captain Lewis! Come here and see what I’ve found!” Man-With-Red-Hair was peering into a [hole in the ground](#). As I drew near I could hear the sounds of young pups.

“Coyote,” I said in Shoshone.

“A wolf that burrows? A burrowing dog? How unusual. Perhaps they are a type of fox.” Lewis looked around for the mother and spotted her pacing on the hill above us. “They are an odd shape for a wolf. Perhaps they are prairie wolves.” Captain Lewis stopped and made shapes and scratches in his little book.

“No.” I shook my head. “Coyote. Not wolf. Not fox.” But there was no one near enough to us to interpret for me and Lewis didn’t know what I meant. For the rest of our journey the Pretty People called them burrowing dogs. Lewis made scratches in his [journal](#) again:

*“Clark found a den of young wolves while walking today. This small wolf or burrowing dog of the prairies is the inhabitant of the open plains. They usually associate in bands of ten or twelve, sometimes more, and burrow near some pass or place where game passes by. They hunt in bands and seize their prey near their burrows where they raise their young. They retreat to these burrows when chased, and when a person approaches they bark with the sound of a small dog...”*

*The large wolf found here is not as large as those of the Atlantic states. They are lower and thicker and have shorter legs. They never take refuge in the ground or burrow so far as I have been able to inform myself. We scarcely see a gang of buffalo without observing*

*a parcel of those faithful shepherds on their skirts in readiness to take care of the maimed and wounded. The large wolf never barks, but howls as those of the Atlantic states do.”*

When Drouillard joined us on the shore, Captain Lewis asked me questions about the [swimming birds](#). I knew little about them except that they did not live here but had stopped to rest on their long flight to the land of snow. I had never been to that land. I shared only what my grandmother had taught me.

“Clark! Drouillard!” The Pretty People were shouting and pointing down the river. A giant brown bear stood and roared at us.

“Grizzly!” I ducked down in the tall grass and backed away in the opposite direction to hide behind a [beaver dam](#). Clark [shot the bear](#) but it didn’t move. I watched, unable to stir, as Clark and Drouillard quickly poured gunpowder into their gun barrels, rammed a lead ball into the muzzles, poured a small amount of gunpowder where the hammer would strike, and fired again. I heard the Pretty People’s guns fire, too.

But brother [grizzly](#) did not stop roaring and running toward us.

“Run!”

I heard the men yell, but Clark did not run away. Instead, he ran toward the bear, filled the muzzle of his gun again and shot the bear in the lungs.

Still the bear roared, scaring Pompey. Even above the sound of the roiling river, the [Grizzly’s](#) bellow made my heart feel small.

I peeked above the beaver dam and watched the bear swim halfway across the river to a sandbar.

I hid my face and heard Clark’s gun and those of the Pretty People shoot many more times before the bear’s growling stopped.

I was not afraid for myself.



I was protecting my son.

I crawled out of the beaver dam to find the men leaning over the great beast that took a long time to die.

“He must weigh over 500 pounds.” Man-With-Red-Hair shook his head as he lifted the dead bear’s [paws](#) and studied it. Captain Lewis wrote these scratches in his [journal](#) about the grizzly bear:

*“...That bear made the most tremendous roaring from the moment he was shot. We had no means of weighing this monster; Capt. Clark thought he would weigh 500 lbs. but I think he weighed at least 100 pounds more. He measured 8 Feet 7½ Inches from the nose to the extremity of the hind feet. His claws were five in number on each foot and were 4¾ inches in length. We divided him among the men and boiled the oil and put it in a cask for future use; the oil is as hard as hogs’ lard when cool, much more so than that of the black bear. This bear differs from the common black bear in several respects: its claws are much longer and its tail shorter; it’s hair which is of a reddish or brown, is longer thicker and finer than that of the black bear; his liver lungs and heart are much larger even in proportion with his size; the heart particularly was as large as that of a large ox. His [maw](#) was also ten times the size of black bear, and was filled with flesh and fish. This animal also feeds on roots and almost every species of wild fruit.”*

Captain Clark wasn’t the only one who discovered a prize that day. Seaman captured his own [goat](#) and had a great feast.

When I closed my eyes that night, I had no idea that in a few days my husband would anger the captains and surprise me with something he did not know.

# Chapter 8

After meeting brother Grizzly more than once, our captains ordered us to walk two-by-two everywhere we went.

One windy morning while our captains walked along the edge of the river, Charbonneau guided the white pirogue with the long board at the back of the boat called a “[tiller](#).” It did not happen often that the captains were out of the boat at the same time. Usually when one captain walked to stretch his legs, the other one stayed with the boat. But because of the bears, they walked together.

The [wind](#) was almost always strong, but on this day blew angry and fierce. I tucked Pompey into his cradleboard and tied its little harness tight around his chin so that air would not sting his ears. When the sky let out a tremendous sigh and its haughty breath filled the sail of our pirogue, the boat leaned over and filled with water. That is when Charbonneau let go of the tiller, threw his hands up in the air and cried, “*Mon Dieu!*”

Peter, the fiddle player, was on the boat with us. Peter was not only good at making music. Man-With-Red-Hair called him his best boatman. Even though Peter had only one eye, he didn’t seem to miss or need a second one.

“Charbonneau, grab that tiller, man!”

“*Mon Dieu!* I can’t swim! We’re going under!”

“You will grab that tiller and right this boat on my order or I will shoot!” Peter pulled out his gun and pointed it at Charbonneau, but I knew he would not shoot because Pompey and I were in the way.

The boat tipped further and some of the captains’ things spilled out into the river. I had no fear of water and was a strong swimmer. It did not bother me to lean out of the boat and pull the

captains' papers, magic tools, medicines and other things back into the boat before the swift waters took them back down the river or they sank to the bottom.

The captains stood on the bank yelling and firing their guns but we could not hear them. Seaman jumped in and swam swiftly toward us. I knew that if Charbonneau fell over the side, Seaman would pull him to the shore. A man who cannot swim? I had never known of anyone who could not swim. If one walks, why can't one swim?

Peter took the tiller from Charbonneau and guided the boat to shore where we unloaded the wet things so they could dry. The captains were not happy with my husband.

"Charbonneau! What is the meaning of this? You assured us you could [swim](#)." Man-With-Red-Hair's face was bright with anger.

"Forgive me, but I cannot. I am deathly afraid of water." Charbonneau confessed. Drouillard explained my husband's words to me while he and Captain Lewis helped me lay out the papers to dry.

"I don't know if he is extremely brave or a complete fool," Drouillard said. "To agree to travel on the water when he is afraid of water, *oui*, that is bravery. But to lie? That put all of us in danger."

That night when we all sat around the fire, the captains stood on each side of me and asked all the Pretty People to look at them and for Drouillard to interpret so I could understand. "Janey, we want to thank you for your calm, quick thinking today."

I smiled down at my hands.

Man-With-Red-Hair continued: "Janey possesses equal fortitude and resolution of any man on this expedition. And we thank her for reacting swiftly in a desperate situation."

The Pretty People cheered. I hid my face in my son's blanket. I had done what I was supposed to do. I was part of the tribe. These were my people. It was my job to help them. I knew how much those papers meant to Captain Lewis. I watched how his fingers followed each line he

scratched and how he cared for each page. If my moccasins or beadwork fell overboard, I would want someone to save it.

That night when I lay next to my husband in the tent cradling Pompey in my arms, I let the captains' words sing over and over again in my head.

“Janey equal.”

I was as valuable as a man.

##

I was not afraid, but I was aware. My eyes never stopped looking for invaders, animal or human. I had even keener eyes now that I was a mother. I could not let anyone take my baby from me as I was taken from my family.

Charbonneau was not happy that the captains were pleased with me. They were not pleased with him. He was a coward, and everyone knew it.

When the captains were not looking, he took me behind the docked pirogues. “You are my wife; that is my son.” He pointed to the tipi where Pompey slept in his cradleboard. “You have no reason to talk or walk with anyone but me.”

“I speak to no man, husband. Captain Lewis asks me questions about herbs and plants. Man-With-Red-Hair asks me about animals. The others speak to Pompey, not me. I do not understand their words.”

“His name is not Pompey. His name is Jean-Baptiste.”

“I know that is the name you have given him. Man-With-Red-Hair and the Pretty People...”

Charbonneau slapped me and threw me to the ground. “Man-With-Red-Hair! That’s all you ever talk about.”

He pinned me down and leaned into my face. “France sold this land to these Americans. And now they will take it from you and all your kind. They are your enemies. You understand? Man-With-Red-Hair is your enemy.”

I do not know how long I lay on the ground feeling the blows of my husband. I had been beaten many times by Buffalo Woman. I was not afraid of being beaten. I learned to go inside myself to a secret place where I could not feel the blows. Inside myself was courage and strength. I wrapped my emotions around them and held on until the beating time was over.

My husband was wrong. Man-With-Red-Hair was not my enemy. He loved Pompey. An enemy hurts you. It was not Lewis or the Pretty People who beat me this day.

Once, when Charbonneau thought no one was looking, he hit me so hard I fell to the ground and cried out because I had not seen him coming.

Man-With-Red-Hair grabbed Charbonneau’s fist and stopped it from finding my face. “You will not put your hands on Janey again.”

“She’s my woman, and I’ll beat her if I want to.”

“She is under my command, as are you, and you will not hit her. Do I make myself clear?”

Man-With-Red-Hair’s blue eyes looked like the ice that freezes on top of the river in the cold. I did not want him to make Charbonneau angry. He might beat me harder next time.

But he never hit me again after that. And I was grateful to Man-With-Red-Hair who always looked out for me to keep me safe.

##

Peter must have used his missing eye when he shot a beaver only to wound him. Seaman went after it, and came out of the water yelping and bleeding from a [bite](#).

Man-With-Red-Hair and Lewis ran to the dog and examined him. Lewis groaned at the sight of the wound. “It’s ripped open an artery in his leg. Quick, Janey, get the medicine box.”

Lewis quickly tied a rag around the bleeding leg above the wound. “Oh, Seaman, buddy, you’ve really gone and done it now, haven’t you?” When I brought the medicine box, he took out sharp tools and thread to sew up the gash.

I sat and stroked Seaman’s big head. “It’s okay, boy. You will be better soon. Do not feel bad about that beaver. You will get the next one.”

“I don’t know if he’ll pull through this, Clark.” Lewis brushed a tear from his cheek. “It’s bad. Really bad.”

“Seaman is a tough and determined fellow, Lewis. He’ll be fine. You’ll see. He’ll probably outlive us all.” Man-With-Red-Hair gave Captain Lewis’s shoulder a squeeze and stood aside as the men passed by to check on Seaman. We moved him to the tipi and I spent the rest of the evening soothing and hand feeding him venison that the Pretty Faces hunted that day.

A few days later as we had settled down to sleep, Seaman jumped up and barked and growled with such anger I was afraid an enemy tribe had found us. I heard the pounding of hooves, and a loud crash. The men ran from the tipi and I held onto Pompey and waited to see what the noise was about.

“It’s trampled the white pirogue!” Charbonneau shouted from where he’d followed Seaman out the door. “It’s headed for the Tipi! Janey is inside with Pompey!”

I looked through the flap of the tent and saw Seaman place himself between us and a huge bull buffalo, grunting, snorting and running straight for us. The wounded dog latched on to the beasts’ ear and didn’t let go. It came so close I could feel the breath blowing from its nostrils but Seaman’s bite caused it to turn away from the tipi. Seaman held on until it ran away toward the prairie behind us.

The next morning we could see the tracks and how close its [hooves](#) had come to the heads of some of the sleeping Pretty People. York’s gun was trampled inside the boat and Captain Clark was

unhappy that York had not kept his weapon with him. I felt bad for York. A gun could be fixed, could it not? But no one was hurt. We had a wounded dog to thank for that.

Seaman was much braver than my husband. A few days later when he and Drouillard were hunting and came upon a Grizzly, Charbonneau cried, "*Mon Dieu!*" threw up his hands and hid in the bushes while Drouillard shot the bear in the head. For a trapper and hunter, my husband showed little courage.

Every day we got a little closer to the land of my people. It was getting harder now for the boats to move on the river without pulling them with ropes. We were getting closer to the mountains and the riverbanks were steep and rocky. If they couldn't walk on shore, the Pretty People walked in the river in mud that pulled off their moccasins. The sharp rocks cut their feet. Instead of prairie, great white cliffs rose up like tall lodges on each side of the river.

It was during the pulling of the boats that I began to feel ill. A pain grew in my stomach that left me shaky. I tried to tell Charbonneau but he was afraid to let the captains know because they might make him pull the ropes, too.

When we came to a place of two rivers, the captains were confused. The Hidatsa had not told them of this.

"Janey, which river do we take?" Man-With-Red-Hair asked.

"I do not know this river." I could barely speak, the pain in my stomach was bad. I tried to remain standing but my legs wouldn't hold me. "Pompey." I fell forward to keep Pompey from being hurt as he was strapped to my back.

Lewis knelt beside me and felt my forehead. "She's burning up. We'll camp here. We need to make new moccasins before we journey on so this is a good place to rest."

York must have set up the tipi by himself. I awoke to find myself in it, burning with fever and a sharp, unrelenting pain in my lower stomach. Charbonneau sat beside me refusing to leave or eat.

“I will go nowhere until she is well.” I heard him say.

Did he care for me? Or was he afraid he would not be allowed to continue on with the Pretty People should I die? What would happen to Pompey?

No. I must not die, I told myself. I must live.

Pompey needs me.



# Chapter 9

June 16, 1805

I heard Charbonneau somewhere in the fog of my pain say that Lewis had gone to find the Great Falls. Pompey's cry filled my ears along with Man-With-Red-Hair singing to him. Pretty People's voices came in and out of my tipi, asking about me, a Hidatsa slave.

"Is she feeling better this morning? What can we do?"

"Do not worry," I wanted to tell them. "I am strong. I am Janey. I am equal and will be well again."

I barely felt it when Man-With-Red-Hair [cut gashes](#) in my legs to free the poison from my body. It flowed out onto my pallet warm and red, and left me weak and trembling.

"Will she live?" I heard Charbonneau's voice somewhere above me.

"I don't know." Man-With-Red-Hair whispered. "She's very sick. You waited too long to tell me of her condition. If she dies, it is your fault."

"But I...I didn't, I...oh she mustn't die. *Ma petite Cherie*, you must not die." I felt Charbonneau's breath on my face and turned away. I was too hot. The pain in my stomach gripped me like an angry grizzly and my fingers and arms twitched. I could not stop shaking.

Man-With-Red-Hair rubbed my shuddering limbs. "Perhaps, when Captain Lewis returns, he will have a cure. I've done all I can. Seaman and I are going to take Pompey for a short walk and then you, Charbonneau, must feed him some buffalo broth for breakfast."

"But I don't know how to care for a child," Charbonneau whined.

"It is time you learn. If he loses his mother, he will need you. He is not a bear that you can run from. He is your son."

Charbonneau could not raise my son alone. This sickness would not take me. If only my eyes would open and I could sit up and hold my son. If only...

I faded in and out of consciousness for days. I thought it was a dream when I heard Lewis's voice: "Drouillard, go back to where we found the [sulfur](#) springs. Bring me some of the waters there. I don't know if it will help or not, but perhaps the minerals will heal her. Clark, bring me my bottles of [Peruvian bark](#) and [laudanum](#). I'll stay with her today and administer the medicines while you make ready for our [portage](#) around the [Great Falls](#)."

Every time my eyes opened, Captain Lewis poured the bitter water into my mouth.

"Drink this, Janey, it will make you feel better."

I didn't want to. It tasted awful. But I was too weak to resist and I didn't dare disobey the captain.

By evening my fever broke and the next day I was able to sit up drink the buffalo broth Charbonneau gave me.

"You must eat now, Charbonneau. She will be fine." Captain Lewis handed him a wooden bowl of soup. "You haven't eaten in days."

Charbonneau nodded and took the bowl. I looked into his eyes that shone with tears. Could it be that he cared about me? Or did he only care that he would not feel shamed by my death?

Three days later I felt well enough to feed Pompey myself. And I was hungry! I hunted for prairie turnips and ate so many of them with dried fish that I got sick again. Man-With-Red-Hair was angry with Charbonneau because he told him to watch me closely and see that I didn't eat much.

"Captain Lewis! Come quickly, Janey is ill." Man-With-Red-Hair helped me back to my pallet in the tipi where I sat holding my stomach, moaning and shaking. Tears ran down my cheeks and I removed Pompey from my back and handed him to Man-With-Red-Hair. Pompey kicked his legs and giggled, happy to be with his favorite captain.

Captain Lewis entered and rushed to my side. "What is it? She was doing better."

Man-With-Red-Hair pointed to Charbonneau. "That lazy husband of hers didn't watch her

and she ate her fill of [white apples](#) and [dried fish](#).”

Lewis’s face glowed red. He turned to Charbonneau and bellowed, “Did I not command you to watch her closely and not allow her to eat?”

“Yes, but she was feeling better and she was hungry...”

“You lazy Frenchman!” Lewis yelled at Charbonneau while he gave me medicines and covered me in buffalo skins.

He didn’t need to worry about me eating too much.

I would not make that mistake a second time.

### **June 22-29, 1805**

I felt much better, but every day of our [journey around the Great Falls](#), Man-With-Red-Hair never let me travel far from him.

“Stay with me, Janey.” He would call to me if I wandered too far ahead or stayed too far behind. Even Seaman nudged my hand to make me walk faster or stood in front of me and wouldn’t let me pass if I walked too fast.



The Pretty People walked on the land now and pulled our canoes and supplies up the great hill above the falls. For eighteen days we cut our feet on the prickly pear cactus and sharp rocks. Ropes cut into the strained muscles of the men as they pulled the heavy wooden canoes filled with supplies on trailers they had made from a giant cottonwood tree—the only one we found for miles. It was two of Charbonneau’s feet wide and its fingers touched the clouds. It stood waiting for us on the edge of the river as if it had always known its ultimate purpose. I heard some of the Pretty People talk of “miracles.” When I asked the meaning of this word, Man-With-Red-Hair said “miracles” were like good medicine.

I wondered if creator Wolf had put that lone tree there on purpose, knowing we would need it. That meant he had to put it there many moons ago and be able to see into the distant future.

“Someone must [plan our steps](#), Pompey. There are no other trees anywhere. Do you find this as curious as I?”

I enjoyed talking to Pompey in the evenings while the men danced and Peter played his

fiddle. I did not talk at any other time.

“These white braves never complain, Pompey. They work hard and still they dance. They are great warriors. Remember their ways, my son.”

It took two days to pull a load from our camp at the bottom of the falls to our camp above on [White Bear Island](#). Each day I learned that not all white men were lazy and weak like my husband. I carried only Pompey up rugged ravines and hills and he was no burden. When I felt too tired to take another step, I watched these braves strain [against the ropes](#) and remembered that my load was light.

Captain Lewis talked to me often about what he called an “invention.” He even spoke of it as he pulled prickly cactus thorns from his feet in the evening. “When we get everything transferred to White Bear Island, I will show you my iron boat, Janey. It is a fine idea. Yes indeed. No one thinks it will float, but I know it will.”

Captain Lewis’s [iron boat](#) was a mysterious bundle of iron pieces. I did not understand how those pieces could make a boat but I had learned that Captain Lewis knew many things that I did not, even though I knew many things he didn’t.

We left the white pirogue at the bottom of the falls in a [cache](#). I had never seen people bury this many things to find them later. Especially not a boat. Captain Lewis didn’t think we would need it since we had his iron boat but he wanted it for the journey back to Father Jefferson.

But the Pretty People kept the mast and made a sail for the boats they pulled on the wagons. The wind was strong on the prairie and it helped to lighten their load when they attached the sail. These men were very smart. I wanted to be smart as they. I would ask Captain Lewis to show me what his scratches meant and how his people got ideas like a sail on the prairies.

The wind did not keep the bugs away. Day after day the mosquitoes ate our flesh and thick swarms of large gnats got into our eyes. I was careful to keep Pompey’s face covered, but he fussed from being hot and not being able to see. I was thankful for the times he slept.

At the fire one evening I handed Man-With-Red-Hair a container of bear grease.

“What is it, Janey? I’m busy at the moment and have already eaten.”

I stood silent before him and held the container out to him again while he pulled thorns from his moccasins.

“Janey, what is it you want me to do with this?”

I put my fingers in the grease and rubbed it onto Man-With-Red-Hair’s face.

“What on earth are you doing?”

The men watching us laughed.

I motioned to the sky and pinched his face with my fingers and shook my head no. I spread the bear grease on my arms and face and rubbed it into Pompey’s skin and hair. I uncovered him and held him naked out in front of me.

“Janey, don’t! Pompey will be a blotch of welts if you don’t keep him covered.” He took Pompey from me and quickly wrapped him in a blanket.

I held out my bare arms to show him that no bugs would come near.

“The mosquitoes aren’t biting her, Captain.” Drouillard shouted.

Man-With-Red-Hair raised his eyebrows in understanding, grabbed the container of grease and rubbed it all over himself. “Lewis! Everyone! Janey has a cure for these troublesome mosquitoes!”

Globs of bear grease were passed about and the men helped one another slather it on themselves.

Now we needed to keep Seaman from licking it off of us.

##

Even though the gnats were thick, I could not close my eyes. Great bears surrounded us on all sides. I could not see them but I could feel them by the way the buffalo behaved. There were buffalo as far as my eyes could see. I heard Man-With-Red-Hair say that “ten-thousand” crossed in

front of us in one day. We waited for them to cross as they dented the muddy earth with their hooves. When the earth hardened we tripped in the holes they made and our ankles swelled from our feet turning the wrong way in the crooked hollows.

On the last day of our portage, the prairie was too wet for traveling. When a large dark cloud blew toward us, Man-With-Red-Hair pulled Pompey and me to shelter in a ravine under some rocks. Pompey cried in my arms because the rain got in his eyes.

The water fell so quickly that the angry river overflowed and thundered toward us, filling the ravine.

Man-With-Red-Hair pushed me up the slope to higher ground where my husband stood, terrified and frozen. Pompey's cradleboard was ripped from my hand in a torrent of water and I saw Man-With-Red-Hair's compass and tomahawk float away with it.

"Janey, keep going! Don't stop! Go!"

He pushed me again up the hill and I tried to climb the slope but the mud under my feet moved and I slid back down into the rising water with Pompey in my arms and the water swirling angrily about our heads.

"Man-With-Red-Hair! Take Pompey! Help Pompey!" I shouted loudly.

But the river shouted louder.

And swallowed my cries.

# Chapter 10

I felt Man-With-Red-Hair push me out of the water and up the muddy [ravine](#). Charbonneau finally came to life, grabbed my arms, and pulled me up as I clung to Pompey. Once on higher ground, I turned to see if Man-With-Red-Hair was safe but he disappeared in an angry swirl of brown icy water.

“Captain!” I shouted.

I had never said Captain before.

The water was cold and Pompey and I so wet I thought my bones would float. I screamed for Man-With-Red-Hair to give me his hand.

His head bobbed over the swirling waters and he clutched on to a rock. Coughing and exhausted, he slowly made it up the ravine and onto the upper bank where he lay on his back panting. The rain fell like thick buffalo robes onto our heads. Pompey was naked, and cried from the cold.

“Cap’n Clark!” York’s voice sounded small in the rain and he looked even smaller in the distance. We had been separated when he’d gone to hunt for supper. But when the rains came, he told me later, he came to look for us.

“York!” I yelled. Charbonneau stood frozen to his spot, wheezing from the close call of death. I helped Man-With-Red-Hair stand and he leaned against me as we stumbled toward camp in the downpour.

York ran to the Captain. “You OK, Cap’n?” He leaned down to see the Captain’s eyes.

Man-With-Red-Hair nodded. “Take Janey and Pompey to camp and get them dried off. I don’t want her to get sick again.”

York scooped me and Pompey up in his great arms and within minutes we were inside the tipi, where York helped me warm Pompey.



“Git out o’ them clothes, Janey. Cap’n’s orders now.” York reached for my shirt and I pulled away and nodded that I understood.

Outside I heard men crying out and when I looked outside, saw the Pretty Faces covered in blood, tripping and falling on the ground.

“York!” I motioned to him and he stopped playing with Pompey to look out of the tipi.

“Wha’ on earth happened to the Corps?” York handed Pompey to me and rushed outside.

“[Hail](#),” Drouillard said. “Big as my hand.”

Man-With-Red-Hair and Charbonneau limped into camp, but the captain immediately turned his attention to the Pretty People. In spite of the rain, I also helped the men settle under buffalo skins and handed out dry furs for blankets.

“Janey, get back inside.” Man-With-Red-Hair pointed to the tipi but I ignored him and continued to help the men by making a balm with the herbs in my medicine pouch and soothing their wounds.

Man-With-Red-Hair gave each soldier a dram of the spirit water that made men warm and sleepy if given only a little. He pushed me and my husband inside and made us drink, too.

“Stay inside. You’ve done enough. Get out of those wet clothes and cuddle up with Pompey by the fire. York, guard her and don’t let her leave this tipi. I want her and Pomp warm and dry before falling asleep. Charbonneau, come with me.”

Charbonneau interpreted for me and after they left, York turned his back to me while I slid underneath a buffalo blanket and removed my tunic. I wrapped up in a dry fur and hung my tunic on a stick near the fire to dry. Seaman dried himself by the fire, too, and I curled up next to him and laid my head on his shoulder. Pompey fell asleep in my arms inside the fur blanket between Seaman and me. I listened to York sing as my eyelids grew too heavy to hold open. The warmth of the fire, the soothing voice of York, and the fatigue of the day pulled them firmly over my eyes and I slept.

**July 1, 1805**

Captain Lewis was talking to himself again. I was a quiet one and noticed things that others did not. I helped him lay out the 28 elk and 4 buffalo hides that the men had spent days hunting for and preparing. We would use them to cover the iron frame of the Captain's boat.

I had only built such boat frames with tree limbs. Captain Lewis's frame unfolded and fastened together. He showed me how he would lay the skins over the frame and make a skin boat. But I knew right away there was a problem with his plan.

"Trees?" I asked the captain.

His face grew dark. He furrowed his brow, mumbled and paced up and down beside the iron frame. "Yes, that's a problem. We need [pine tar](#) to seal the seams."

I didn't know English very well, but I knew he agreed with me.

For several days he paced about, circling the boat and mixing things in his pot to make tar. When it didn't work, he'd throw the pot and stomp off for a walk, Seaman at his heels.

Seaman was in pain. He limped from the bruises on his feet from the rocks, and the prickly pear thorns that left gaping wounds when I pulled them from his paws each night. Sometimes he yelped when he walked but he kept going. He was a brave warrior, too.

Captain Lewis came back to the iron frame and ordered the men to sew the skins together with strips of leather. When they were done, he mixed charcoal, beeswax and buffalo tallow and slathered it on the seams. But the continuous rain kept the skins wet. The Pretty People built a log scaffold and laid the boat over a low fire to dry the skins so they would shrink and hold tight to the frame. When it was finally dry, they coated the entire boat with more of Captain Lewis's homemade glue.

**July 9, 1805**

Captain Lewis was happier than Seaman with a ram's bone.

“Let’s launch her well, men.” Lewis instructed the Pretty People how to put the iron boat in the river.

He shouted with joy watching the boat float. “She’s a perfect cork in the water. We can proceed forward. Man the canoes!”

We sailed only a short distance when the wind became angry and threw the water high over the sides of our boats.

Captain Lewis’s prized invention tilted and filled with water. The skins peeled away from the iron frame. No one spoke. We knew how much the Captain loved his boat.

I saw the captain’s shoulders [sink like his precious boat](#). The Pretty People followed his command when he motioned for them to come to him. “Take the frame and put it in a cache. We’ll pick it up on the way back home.”

He walked to where Man-With-Red-Hair stood watching from the bank. “The men will need to find trees for canoes.”

Man-With-Red-Hair nodded. I felt the words he kept in his mouth by reading his face. I was good at reading faces because I did not know the language. His face said, “We have lost many suns of travel waiting for you to make your boat.” But it also said, “I am sorry your dream did not come true.”

The rest of the day the Pretty People hunted for trees to make dugout canoes and Captain Lewis left the camp without telling anyone where he was going. Seaman trotted behind him and I wished I could go, too, but I knew his spirit needed to be alone. Even if I was with him, he would not know I was there. But it hurt my stomach to see him sad.

Man-With-Red-Hair shouted. “Charbonneau! Take a man with you to bring an [elk](#) for making [boudin blanc](#). It will cheer Captain Lewis for you to make it.”

While the men hunted elk and trees, I stayed in camp and played with Pompey. I made him a [deer-toe rattle](#) and sang him a story about the First Man and his great boat.

“Pompey, I’m going to tell you a great story. Are you listening?”

*‘First Man told three Mandans to make a great enclosure.*

*The animals and people got inside it.*

*The great water came and covered the earth*

*But the people in the enclosure were saved.*

*People who ignored First Man and didn’t get in the enclosure died.’”*

I held on to Pompey’s hands with one of mine and let him bounce on his legs as I shook the rattle. “You are a good dancer, Pompey.”

My baby made me laugh.

“This is a great story, Pompey. The Mandan celebrate it as the ‘Memorial to the Flood.’ When you grow up, you will make offerings of tobacco and dance. You will also prove your bravery and have great pain. It is called *Okipa*.”

I picked Pompey up and laid him on Charbonneau’s buffalo blanket for a nap. “Will you play the sacred [turtle drum](#) when you are older, Pompey? Is that your good medicine?”

I patted my hands like a drum to show him how to play. He looked at me with big dark eyes that glimmered like dewy [chokecherries](#) and smiled. I laughed at his toothless grin and buried my nose in his neck.

“Very soon we will be with the people of my mother, Pompey. She will be surprised to learn I have given life to you.”

**July 24-30, 1805**

When we moved together I imagined we were a village standing still and the earth moved beneath us. We were one body when it was quiet and the dipping of our paddles kept rhythm with the heavy breathing of men rowing in the hot sun.

On stony slopes, [mountain goats](#) tripped up and down the steep rocks and I tried to show Pompey but he was asleep. I put him in the new cradle I made and tied him to my back. [Swans](#), [geese](#) and [Sandhill cranes](#) danced in the waters and Seaman had a feast. When we stopped, the men captured some of the birds for supper and Captain Lewis hunted alone with Seaman for elk. We did not see brother buffalo anymore.



Pompey was old enough to eat food now, but when I chewed up tiny pieces of meat and gave them to him, he spit them back out at me. Charbonneau laughed at us and Pompey clapped when he laughed.

At the end of the day, we bathed our sore feet in the cold river water. They ached from walking on flint rocks and prickly pear cactus. My own feet were covered with hot circles that oozed and throbbed. I used my medicine pouch to make them feel better and offered some to Charbonneau and Drouillard who accept my offering. I tried to show the Pretty People how to make their own poultice, but they were busy talking and I was the quiet one. They did not notice I tried to help them. York let me help him, though. York and I were good friends. Sometimes when I was tired, he carried me on his shoulders. But I would not let him go far.

“You are not horse. You are York.”

Why should I not walk if I am equal?

After we bathed our feet, I built a fire to keep the mosquitoes away from Pompey. Charbonneau and Drouillard joined us while Lewis put his own medicine on the feet of the men. He thought his medicine was better than mine and didn’t listen when I tried to show him how to make it. I don’t know if his is better, but if the men do not cry out in pain, it is good medicine.

I handed Pompey to York and washed Seaman’s feet and pulled [thorns](#) out of his paws and legs. He licked my hands as I put my medicine on him. It is how he told me “thank you.”

“We come near The Three Forks.” I told Charbonneau, and Drouillard heard me, too.

“*Oui?*” Drouillard asked. “We must tell the Captains.”

I nodded. Captain Lewis had not been the same since the sinking of his boat, and Man-With-Red-Hair acted impatient. I hadn’t walked with him in a handful of days. I let Drouillard tell him the good news.

The next day the Pretty People put a flag on their canoes to show other people of this land that they are not Indian like me. I recognize these waters and the rocks that stand-so-high-I-do-not-know-why-they-do-not-fall-down. This is where they took me from my mother. This is where I was no more “little girl” and became “slave.”

But then there is fog.

No.

It is thick, black smoke that hides the sun.

Like a hot, angry river, a wall of fire rolls toward our wooden canoes.

And there is no place to run.

# Chapter 11

“Fire!” Charbonneau screamed but did not jump out of the canoe because he was a man who could not swim.

“Row to the middle! The middle of the river!” Man-With-Red-Hair shouted from the bank and jumped into the river and waded toward us. Beavers dammed the river and it was only waist high. “Janey! Wet down Pompey’s clothes and blankets! Wet your hair!”

I was already dipping Pompey and his clothes in the water when Drouillard interpreted the Captain’s words. But just as I thought it would, the fire turned and licked up the land in the opposite direction of the river. I knew the fire would not reach our canoe.

“Why on earth must they [burn the land](#)?” Charbonneau trembled before me in the canoe.

I could have told him that they must burn the land to renew it for animals to graze. Sometimes, it was burned for war. Other times it burned so that there would not be too much grass to ignite when lightning struck. But Charbonneau did not have ears to hear me. I kept silent.

Some of the Pretty People, Charbonneau and Man-With-Red-Hair, walked along the shore among the [flint rocks](#) and prickly pear cactus. I noticed the captain limping and knew he would need rest soon. Seaman rode in the canoe with me and Pompey because his coat gathered tiny seeds that made him itch and yelp when he scratched. While Peter rowed, and Pompey slept on my back, I cut the seeds out of Seaman’s coat with a knife and sang him a song about the baby buffalo and their friend, Seaman.

When we stopped to rest, I saw Man-With-Red-Hair stumble into camp. His skin was like the ashes of a cold fire. When I saw his bloody moccasins, I knew that bad medicine was in him. I built him a [bower from twigs](#) because the tipi was too warm for a man who burned with a fire inside.



I helped him lie down on a pallet of furs I made for him and bathed his feet. 17 thorns I pulled from his flesh. In the middle of his heel bulged a hot white circle. When I saw it, I brought Captain Lewis to the bower to show him the [sore](#).

Captain Lewis opened his medicine bag and pulled out a needle. “You have an infected blister, Captain Clark. I’ll need to lance it.” He quickly pierced the bubble on Man-With-Red-Hair’s heel.

I jumped back when it exploded smelly green, yellow and white mucous. I knew then what to do. I pushed Captain Lewis aside and bathed Man-With-Red-Hair’s feet in warm water and made poultices for his sores. I put new moccasins on his feet and sat with him until he fell asleep. I kept a cool cloth on his head and fell asleep sitting up with Pompey on my back. I did not want my white brother to die.

I heard a shout and recognized the voice of George Gibson. I did not move from Man-With-Red-Hair’s side. I knew that Captain Lewis would care for him. The sky was growing dark and I watched three shadows enter the tipi. Their voices carried in the dusk.

“Dislocated your shoulder again, eh Gibson?” It was Captain Lewis who spoke.

“Aye, Sir,” said Gibson.

“OK, then. Let’s put it a-right.”

The fire in the tipi cast shadows on the walls. Gibson’s shadow sat on a barrel while two other men’s shadows held his arms straight out. Captain Lewis’s shadow looped a rope under the armpit and [pulled the shoulder into place](#). Gibson howled briefly and his shadow stood and shook hands with the other shadows.

I looked back at Man-With-Red-Hair who slept soundly. I felt his forehead and it was cooler now. Tomorrow he would be much better and I would feed him buffalo broth and watch to see that he didn’t eat too much.

## August 1805

We stayed at camp for several days and while I took care of Man-With-Red-Hair, Captain Lewis made scratches in his book about the birds he called [blue grouse](#) and [pinyon jay](#). I showed him where to find [currants](#) and he made scratches about those, too.

He liked to make lists—scratches that stood in rows like slices of squash drying in the sun. Charbonneau did not like it when I asked about the magic scratches. But Captain Lewis didn't mind my questions.

"Words?" I pointed to his papers.

"Yes, Janey. Would you like to know them?"

I nodded and he pointed to the scratches and he read them aloud to me.

["Curlews. Mergansers. Plovers."](#)

I repeated each word and he explained which bird he meant.

He showed me other scratches he made about different kinds of berries, [honeysuckles](#), [wild roses](#), and [willow](#). I tried to ask him why he scratched them on paper when he could see them with his eyes, but he did not understand.

During the day we rode in the canoes and in the evenings I took care of Man-With-Red-Hair's wounds as well as some of the other Pretty People who were sick. When I pointed to things I recognized, like [Beaverhead Rock](#), they knew what I had known many miles sooner.

We were near the home of my people.

That seemed to make them feel better.

Man-With-Red-Hair's ankle was hot and swollen. Captain Lewis said it was infection and that he should not walk. But it was not easy to keep him still. He wore worry on his face.

"You are sure they have horses, Janey?" He spoke in sign language.

I smiled and nodded. "*Dehee'ya.*"

"*Dehee'ya?* Horse?" Man-With-Red-Hair tried the Shoshone word in his mouth.

I smiled. “Yes. Horse.” I tried English words in mine. I knew we needed horses to carry our supplies over the mountains to the big waters.

Captain Lewis decided to go by foot to find the [Shoshone](#). He took three pretty faces: McNeal, Drouillard and Shields. Man-With-Red-Hair was left to ride in the canoes, but he didn’t want to. He wanted to be on his feet but they were still very sore.

We tried to row up the Beaverhead River, but the further we went, the more clogged it became with [beaver](#), [otters](#) and [willows](#). Canoes tipped over and our goods got wet. It was easier for the Pretty People to pull the canoes while Man-With-Red-Hair, Charbonneau and I walked along the shore. Pompey rode happily on my back, squealing at butterflies and kicking his legs and laughing when Man-With-Red-Hair spoke to him.

Captain Lewis was gone many days before I saw people coming toward us across the prairie. At first, I didn’t recognize the thin Indians riding on horses. But as they neared I recognized the markings on their faces that looked like ghosts.

These were my people.

The river had brought me home.

### **August 17, 1805**

I pointed at the people with Captain Lewis and sucked on my fingers to show Man-With-Red-Hair and Charbonneau that these were my people. It was my sign for “these are the people who fed me first.” But I did not see my mother and father among them.

Man-With-Red-Hair looked at me with questions in his eyes. “What, Janey?”

“I’ve never seen her act like this before.” Charbonneau scratched his head.

It is true. I rarely showed my feelings. I was a lone woman among men. My feelings did not matter to anyone so why should I show them? With no tongue to speak the words they knew, how could I tell them?

Tears spilled down my face to finally see my tribe again. I cried not only tears of joy, but I also wept at the hunger on their faces.

And then I saw her. My friend, Jumping Fish, who somehow escaped the Hidatsa kidnappers the day they took me away. I ran into her arms and we embraced. We did not want to let go.

In my arms she felt small and brittle. “Why are you so thin? Why is your hair so short?”

Jumping Fish looked down at the ground. “We hide in the mountains afraid. We have no guns like the [Blackfeet](#), the [Hidatsas](#) and [Atsinas](#) who raid our village. There are no buffalo in the mountains. There is no meat but animals that are small. We eat only berries and roots and sleep under the sky. We are cold for we have no animal skins to cover us or to make tipis. They raid our villages and take all we have.”

Captain Lewis led all of us to the camp he had set up while waiting for us to arrive. I was glad to see Seaman again and gave him his favorite treat: a dead mouse I’d saved for him in my pouch. In one gulp the mouse disappeared.

Pompey squealed at the sight of the big dog and Seaman danced and whined when he saw Pompey. I removed the cradleboard from my back to show Jumping Fish my child. Seaman gave him a kiss and allowed Pompey’s fat little hands to pull on his hair and ears.

Jumping Fish and I had much to say. It had been many moons since I talked with another woman. We talked about our families. She had two daughters but they were not with her. They had stayed in the mountains with her mother.

“And my mother? ”

Jumping Fish looked down and shook her head.

“Janey! Janey where are you?” Drouillard ran through the crowd of Pretty People and Shoshone.

“I am here.” I stepped in front of Drouillard.

“Captain Lewis needs you to meet with the chief. This is why you are with us. To help negotiate horses. It’s very important.”

I felt my stomach jump like a toad inside my skin. It was my tongue that would help the Pretty People today. I hoped I had not forgotten my Shoshone manners.

I walked toward the circle of men and sat beside Charbonneau and kept my eyes lowered as I had been taught. The Shoshone women had never seen a woman invited to council and murmured among themselves. I wanted to tell them about being equal. I wanted to tell them all the things I was now.

Captain Lewis gave instructions. “I will speak to Labiche in English, and Labiche will speak to Charbonneau in French, and he will convey the words to Janey in Shoshone who will then speak to the chief.”

I looked up and saw everyone nodding that they understood.

And then I saw him, brown and beautiful, tall and handsome.

*“neaN babi’ neaN babi’!”*

The Pretty People jumped at the sound of my cry. They had never heard me shout before.

They had never seen me run into a man’s arms as I ran into the arms of the chief who stood and embraced me.

Oh, how we wept. Oh, how the Shoshone rejoiced with us, jumping and shouting.

Man-With-Red-Hair, Captain Lewis, and all the Pretty People stood, staring at the commotion we made.

“Janey has never acted like this before. Why is she hugging the chief?” Man-With-Red-Hair tilted his head toward Captain Lewis.

“Perhaps it’s a ritual of some kind we do not understand.” Captain Lewis frowned.

“I wish she’d explain it to us.” Man-With-Red-Hair looked at Drouillard. “What is going on? Why is Janey hugging that man and weeping?”

Drouillard grinned. “You are not going to believe this one, Captain. Just wait until I tell you.”

# Chapter 12

**August 17, 1805, Continued**

Captain Lewis was impatient. His plans for an orderly meeting to bargain with the Shoshones were ruined. The Shoshones yipped and danced, Chief [Cameahwait](#) cried and I sobbed.

“Drouillard, tell me, man, what is going on here?” Captain Lewis grabbed Drouillard’s arm to get his attention.

“The chief is Janey’s brother, Captain.” Drouillard grinned.

The captains looked at each other and raised their eyebrows. A smile spread over their faces at the same time like a dance. I knew what they were thinking. I know what people think because I watch. Their faces said this:

*“Surely the Shoshones would sell us horses because Janey is related to the chief.”*

After the celebration quieted down, I helped interpret for the captains but this time I sat beside my brother who would not let go of my hand.

“That big dog would make a great feast.” Cameahwait pointed to Seaman.

I shook my head. “He is not for eating. He brings us good medicine and protection.”

Cameahwait grunted and I heard his stomach rumble. I remembered what it was like to be hungry and afraid of other nations. As a Hidatsa slave, I was not free, but I never wanted for food. I never felt the hollow pain of hunger after I was kidnapped.

Captain Lewis handed my brother a [medal](#) with the Great White Father’s picture on one side, and a peace pipe crossed with a tomahawk above clasped hands on the other. My brother was pleased with his gift. Now the captains asked him questions.

“How far is it to the Big Waters?”

“Is there someone who can lead us to the Big Waters?”

The captains gave Cameahwait as many gifts as questions: a [uniform shirt coat](#), scarlet leggings, tobacco, moccasins, [knives](#), beads, and pocket mirrors. To others in the tribe they gave [hulled corn](#). The hungry Shoshones ate it with a frantic eagerness that made my heart weep.

### **August 29, 1805**

My brother, Chief Cameahwait, gave us 29 horses for crossing the Great [Mountains](#). We gave him a pistol, rifle, ammunition and powder and promised him more guns when we got back to St. Louis. Then, they would no longer fear those that raided them and they could hunt buffalo and know hunger no more.

The horses my brother gave us were hungry, weak and untrained. They did not know how to carry burdens on their backs. They were skinny from lack of food. They fell and limped on the steep rocks. I did not think they would carry us far.

Swooping Eagle, an elderly Shoshone guide, and his three sons, agreed to guide us over the mountains and some of the Shoshone women were hired to help carry our supplies. When Man-With-Red-Hair put me on a horse, the women gave me the evil eye. Women were supposed to walk. Women never rode as I did, high upon a strong horse with my son strapped to my back.

“Men, there is no Northwest Passage. Now the question is answered and we go forward.” Captain Lewis meant there was no river route to the Big Waters as men of old believed. Now he could tell Father Jefferson the disappointing truth.

We were not discouraged. We wanted to find this Big Water.

But my heart felt like two hearts. One that longed to stay with my people, and another that longed to be with Man-With-Red-Hair and his [Corps of Discovery](#). They were my tribe now, too. I wanted to see these Big Waters. I wondered if I had two people inside me now.

Can someone be more than one soul? Can one soul be ripped into two?



## September 14-October 6, 1805

I belong to Charbonneau. York belongs to Man-With-Red-Hair. Seaman belongs to Captain Lewis. We are here because we belong to someone who has said, “come here.” But I would follow Man-With-Red-Hair to his Big Waters if I did not belong to Charbonneau. I want to see what his eyes ache to see. The Big Waters must be important for eyes to behold. We suffer much to get there.

There was rain, hail and snow. There were rocks too steep to climb, and trees that lay on the ground too thick to cross. There was snow up to our knees and not enough furs to keep us warm.

Swooping Eagle got lost. The trail was too stony for our weak horses. Some of them slipped and tumbled down the mountainside. Man-With-Red-Hair’s horse stumbled and fell with his [field desk](#). The horse did not suffer. But the field desk was crushed.

Swooping Eagle’s sons and the women left us. The going was too difficult. They were afraid and hungry. They went home to hunt buffalo.

That night, the Pretty People killed a colt to eat. There were no other animals for food in these mountains. I would not eat that baby horse. I dug for roots and found frozen berries for Pompey and me.

The ice made the slopes even harder to climb. The horses’ legs shook from fear, cold and hunger. Ice froze on my eyelashes and my lips chapped, but Pompey stayed toasty warm in his cradle on my back. He rarely cried but fussed when hungry. My milk for my son was getting thin. I did not have enough to eat. I worried about my son being hungry more than I cared about being hungry for myself.

Seaman’s coat filled with balls of snow and each step was painful from the balls of ice between his toes. In the evenings by the fire, I tried to cut the snow from his coat, but it mattered little because within minutes when he walked, it balled up on his fur again.

One day we camped at a hot springs where the men took off their clothes and sat in the warm waters with Seaman who seemed relieved to be free of the snow. But when he got out, his fur froze, and I had to help him unthaw by the fire.

Day after day, the snow, the rain and hail caused us pain. Eight inches of snow made finding a trail difficult. Another colt was killed for food. Again I refused to eat it.

“I cannot eat it.” My teeth chattered as I shook my head.

“You must eat something, Janey,” Man-With-Red-Hair frowned.

“I will find roots and berries. I will not eat a baby horse.”

When hunters found a wild horse and brought it to Man-With-Red-Hair, he ordered the Pretty People to shoot and cook it. Again, I refused to eat brother horse.

“It’s not a colt, Janey. You must eat.” Man-With-Red-Hair led me toward the roasting horse.

I pulled away. “Horses are sacred to Shoshone. I will not eat.”

Hunger was not new to me. I had known it as a Shoshone girl. I knew how to crawl inside myself and endure it. The men eat first, then the women, then the children. Even though I was now equal Janey, I pretended to be that Shoshone girl before she was a Hidatsa slave. I knew how to trick the spirit of hunger. I stayed full of love for my son and the Pretty People and Man-With-Red-Hair. I sang the hunger away. I did not complain as the Pretty People moaned and whined. I embraced the hollowness. I made it a part of who I was.

Charbonneau did not know how to crawl inside. He stayed on the outside of his skin, moaning and complaining and crying. Could I teach him how to find his strength? Or did he like being weak as he was? I did not know. My husband did not speak with me about such things.

My toes burned with cold and the men’s moccasins did not keep their feet warm. We could not feel our hands, our faces, or our feet. I worried that we would lose our limbs. Would Captain Lewis have to cut off my toes as he did the little boy’s at Fort Mandan? I shook even more at the thought.

Finally, the mountains passed under us and we stumbled off its cold slopes onto the warmer [Weippe Prairie](#), where two [Nez Perce](#) boys led us into a camp of Nez Perce children and women who gave us [camas roots](#) and dried [Chinook salmon](#) to eat. The Pretty People ate too much camas and got very sick. Gas, vomiting and diarrhea kept them from doing much more than moaning and rolling on the ground for days.

When the Nez Perce men came home, they pointed their guns at us. But when they saw me with Pompey, they knew a war party would not travel with a woman and a child.

“We are looking for the Big Waters.” Captain Lewis, weak with sickness, spoke with his hands.

Chief Twisted Hair drew rivers on a piece of elk skin. He called them [Clearwater](#), [Snake](#) and [Columbia](#). “You must make canoes from Ponderosa pine trees. You will travel these rivers. They will take you to the Big Waters.”

Even though the Pretty People were sick, they took turns making the canoes for the last river trip to the Big Waters. We settled beside the Clearwater River and the Nez Perce showed us how to hollow out giant logs using [hot coals](#). I helped York raise our tipi and took care of Captain Lewis, who was too sick to sit up. I bathed his head and fed him broth I made from the fish.

We stayed with the Nez Perce for several weeks. I kept care of Captain Lewis but I was worried. There were only camas roots and dried fish to eat, but these made the men sicker. Even though they killed a horse to eat, they were still hungry. I didn’t want to, but I had no choice. I fed horse broth to Captain Lewis. I did not want him to die.

One night while I nursed Pompey by the fire, Peter played his fiddle and York, who wasn’t sick at all, danced. The Nez Perce called him “burnt man” and tried to dance like him. The women giggled while the children continued to examine his arms and legs and tried to rub the dark color off his skin. They thought he wore war paint.

Between songs, I listened to the men speak. I was learning to understand their language better than I could speak it.

“What I wouldn’t give for a slice of bread with butter.” [Francois](#) rubbed his stomach and groaned.

“Forget the bread, just give me the butter,” [John Collins](#) argued.

“I’d love a slice of bacon, now.” [George](#) smacked his lips. “Haven’t seen a pig in ages.”

“There are plenty of dogs about.” [Reuben](#) sharpened his knife on a stone. “I say we try eating one. Can’t be any worse than a horse.”

No one answered right away.

“Might as well. I never thought I’d eat a horse. But when you’re hungry, you’ll eat anything, I reckon.” [Patrick](#) waved his hand toward the empty basket that once held camas roots.

“I say we buy some of their dogs and give it a try.” Reuben pocketed his knife and stood.

I looked toward the dark line of trees where Seaman romped with the Nez Perce children.

I would not let them eat Seaman.

They would have to eat me first.

# Chapter 13

I pointed to the big dog and shook my head.

Man-With-Red-Hair patted my shoulder. “No need to worry. Seaman is safe. There are plenty of other [dogs to eat](#).”

Ruben was the first to kill a dog and roast it. I took Seaman and we followed Man-With-Red-Hair as he hunted for birds. He shot them down from the sky. I ate the birds with him. I could not eat dog. I could not feed my baby dog. Man-With-Red-Hair would not eat dog, either.

This pleased me very much.

## October 7 – November 6, 1805

When we put our canoes in the water, we floated down the river as swift as otters. For the first time in our journey, the water’s current pushed behind us. We would fight no more with the current. Now, the river would sing in harmony with our paddles.

Chief Twisted Hair traveled before us to bring word to neighboring tribes that we were friendly. The Nez Perce were good to us. While the men were sick, they did us no harm. They did not steal from us. Man-With-Red-Hair will not forget.

There were [fast, white waters](#) in the Clearwater River. Swooping Eagle did not think we should ride our canoes through them. Man-With-Red-Hair was excited to try. I strapped Pompey to the front of me and rode with Seaman in the front and Man-With-Red-Hair in the middle. Charbonneau, who could not swim, walked along the shore. I was not afraid. The rivers were my friends, taking me home and to places I saw in my dreams.

It was exciting and frightening riding those [rapids](#). Man-With-Red-Hair grinned at me when we arrived safely below them. Beads of water made his skin glisten in the sun. It was no wonder

they called these men Pretty People. His bright blue eyes sparkled like the midnight stars and the joy on his face made me feel warm inside.

Swooping Eagle would not go with us to the Big Waters. After we rode down the [rapids](#) he slipped away and did not say goodbye. That is the Shoshone way.

We continued on the Clearwater and then the Snake River, riding rapids and meeting the [tribes](#) that lived along the way. We stopped each night to buy wood and dogs from them, which even Captain Lewis, Seaman's master, had grown to enjoy.

"I will not eat a dog." Man-With-Red-Hair shot a crane and Pompey and I joined him in preparing and eating it. I did not understand how Captain Lewis could eat a dog in front of Seaman. That was surely bad medicine.

I did not trust men's bellies and kept Seaman close to me in the evenings. I helped him find food and gave him portions of our meals. I would not let him eat his own kind.

"There are animals to hunt." I spoke better English now and spoke to Man-With-Red-Hair.

"The men are in a hurry. It is easier for them to buy the dogs from the natives and cook them quickly. We are very near the big waters," Man-With-Red-Hair explained.

I did not understand such thinking. But I was happy that Man-With-Red-Hair was not the sort of man to eat a dog.

When we reached the Columbia River, we met a tribe called [Chinook](#). They gathered around us each night, watching our belongings and waiting for a chance to steal. Captain Lewis grew angry when he discovered missing [tomahawks](#) and spoons. He had been kind to the Chinooks.

They watched us ride the white waters each day to see if we would live. If we didn't, they wanted to gather our supplies to keep for themselves. But we always made it through the [rapids](#) without a scratch. I think Man-With-Red-Hair enjoyed the fast rides the most.

"Look, Janey, look there." Man-With-Red-Hair pointed to a tall white mountain. "We are on the map. That's [Mt. Hood](#). Soon we will see the ocean."

“Hood?” I didn’t know that word.

“It’s named for [Lord Samuel Hood](#), a British Admiral. [Explorers](#) have been here before us but they came from the ocean on great ships.”

I was not ignorant. Of course people had been here before the Pretty People. The people of this land were always here. The first people lived on this land since its creation. But the Pretty People gave our mountains, rivers and streams new names instead of asking us what our names were for them. Did a river need two names? Did a mountain ask for a new name just because someone saw it for the first time? If no one saw it, did that mean it didn’t exist before? I did not think so.

Below [Celilo Falls](#) more waters raged. The Chinooks lined the shore, waiting for us to die. But we disappointed them. We were alive, laughing and rejoicing at rides in waters I would not soon forget.

Indians fleeing into a lodge made of reed mats caught my eye. Man-With-Red-Hair paddled to the little island where they lived to introduce himself. He walked into the lodge and then back outside to talk to me.

“Janey, they are terrified. They are weeping, banging their heads—come in with me so they can see we mean them no harm.” Man-With-Red-Hair led me into their little lodge.

When these people, called the [Umatillas](#), saw me with Pompey, they calmed down. Then, with their hands, they explained why they were afraid.

I told Man-With-Red-Hair, “They saw you kill a crane in the sky. They had never seen such a thing before. They think you are a spirit come from the sky to kill them.”

We continued down the Columbia River where the stench of dead and dried fish clung to my nostrils and sunk into the pores of my skin. On the shores, [fleas](#) swarmed in the dead grass and we were miserable with them. I kept Seaman away from the piles of dead fish and fleas but it was of no use. Huge mounds of dried salmon were piled along the river and there were more fleas than hands to slap them away.

“For trade.” An Indian with a [pierced nose](#) spoke with his hands. I did not understand these people well. How could they live with the stink? But I did understand one thing about them: they especially enjoyed watching York dance while Peter played his fiddle.

So did I.

The Chinook Indians we met after the [Celilo falls](#) took from us everywhere we stopped, but we were not threatened with harm. It was their way to take things they felt they were entitled to after they helped us find food. I understood it but the captains did not.

We arrived at a beautiful gorge with many things my eyes had never seen. Giant trees reached up with massive arms on both banks. Waterfalls watered lush plants as they spilled gracefully from on high into the river.

The Indians in this gorge were different, too.

“[Flat heads](#)?” I giggled, pointing to the strange way their heads were shaped. When I saw a baby on a cradleboard with a board pressed onto its forehead, I knew then why they wore their heads this way.

I looked at Pompey’s little round head and watched him crawl all over Man-With-Red-Hair. He played more with this Pretty People papa than he did with Charbonneau. I wondered if Pompey thought that Man-With-Red-Hair was his father, or if he thought all the Pretty People were his fathers. He had so many to play with.

Everything here was different and strange. It was as if the rapids had dropped us into a new world. The rain never stopped. The birds called to one another loud and often.

There were no tipis here. The people lived in [houses made of wooden planks](#).

“These are the first houses I’ve seen since we left St. Louis, Janey.” Man-With-Red-Hair was curious and explored the houses himself. Many families lived in one house but each family had their own door and fire. I had never seen such lodges and wondered if all people in St. Louis lived this way, too.



Many more people lived here than where I came from. Some of the people wore Pretty People [clothes](#). I pointed this out to Charbonneau.

“There are ships that come from the Big Waters to trade for otter pelts.” He explained that there were many people with pale skin, not just the ones we traveled with.

Some of the native people had guns and copper pots. One of them stopped Man-With-Red-Hair and boasted about the English words he knew:

“Musket, powder, shot.”

The proud Chinook also said some words that made Charbonneau laugh. He called them “curse words” and said I must never say them.

The river widened and Man-With-Red-Hair whooped with excitement.

“Can you smell it, Janey? The salt air? The ocean isn’t far away!”

He pushed his paddle harder and the other men strained their backs, longing to see the Big Waters.

### **November 7, 1805**

The morning hung heavy with clouds and fog.

Rain.

Wet, never-ending rain.

Every day we were wet. I tried my best to keep Pompey dry, but now that he was crawling, he was not as content to ride in his cradleboard on my back.

The fog was white and so thick we could not see the trees on the other side of the river. But as the day grew older the fog thinned and disappeared.

Man-With-Red-Hair pointed ahead with his paddle. “Janey! Look! The ocean is in view! It’s the Big Waters—the great Pacific Ocean, which we have been so long anxious to see. Can you hear it Janey? Can you smell it?”

The joy on his face was something I wanted to put in my medicine pouch and keep. He acted like Pompey, wiggling about in the canoe with the paddle over his head.

Later, we learned it wasn't the Big Waters—yet.

“It appears to be a [huge bay](#) near the mouth of the river,” Charbonneau said.

We were trapped on the shores of this bay for almost three weeks as storms roared and trees and rocks crashed down on us. We were cold and wet and in need of new clothes. Our tipi was no longer able to provide shelter with its holes and rips.

Fleas and rain.

Rain and fleas.

They lived in our clothes, our ratty elk skins, and our thin buffalo blankets. They feasted on my ankles and back. I rubbed Pompey with the fat from the birds Man-With-Red-Hair brought me to eat. But still, the fleas would not stop biting.

The men coughed. I worried about them in their wet clothes—sleeping in them, working in them. I hovered over Pompey. He fussed and would not be comforted.

“A feeling person would have sympathy for us if they saw us now.” Man-With-Red-Hair's teeth chattered as he cuddled up with Pompey and me under a reed mat.

Seaman's fur was stiff with salt and thick with fleas. He was miserable, itching and scratching. He whined in pain and boredom and wanted to play with Pompey but I did not want a baby with fleas. I pushed him away. He looked up at me with sad, droopy eyes. He did not understand.

Pompey reached for Seaman with his chubby hands and cried. One of the Pretty People picked him up and talked to him. He never cried for long.

A Chinook came to our camp and offered Captain Lewis a fine robe made of otter skins.

“That's a fine robe, the most beautiful I've ever seen.” The captain licked his lips. “What is the trade?” He offered the Indian a tomahawk and handkerchief, but the Chinook refused.

“What will you take, then?”

I could tell by the captain’s voice he was anxious to buy the otter robe.

The Indian pointed to my belt of blue beads.

It was the only thing I owned that was wholly mine. The women of my clan gave them to me. They were the good medicine of my sisters.

If I gave him my beads, I would not get the otter robe. The robe was for Captain Lewis.

Was that a good trade?

Did equal mean giving away the only beautiful memory I owned?

“Come now,” Captain Lewis held his hand out to me and motioned with his fingers. “Here. I will give you this blue cloth coat. What do you say?”

Captain Lewis was commander.

He put his hands on my beads.

Did I have a choice?

# Chapter 14

Did I have a choice?

I gave my [beads](#) to Captain Lewis.

Did he need the robe more than Pompey and me?

It didn't matter now. The beads were gone.

The Pretty People named this place "Camp Disappointment." The trading ships they waited for never came.

I was disappointed because Man-With-Red-Hair did not take me with him to the top of a ridge to see the Big Waters.

I not only wanted to see these waters for myself.

I wanted to see his face.

"Oh, Janey, its' waters are foaming and they slam hard against the rocky coast, tempestuous and horrible," he spoke with excitement when he returned.

But he did not look at me.

I did not answer. I had gone inside myself to mourn my beads, and to find strength to endure this rain and fleas and loneliness.

## **November 24--December 24, 1805**

"We must go away from these Big Waters where it is dry," I said to Charbonneau.

"We are looking for ships. If we go inland, we can't see them coming. The captains want to send their papers to Father Jefferson and get supplies." Charbonneau explained why we stayed where it always rains and the fleas bite and the air is thick with salt.

The captains called us together for a meeting. Man-With-Red-Hair spoke.

“The Clatsops tell us that the south bank of the river offers more elk and protection from the weather than the north side. We can settle here or there, or go up the river, away from the sea where the weather may be better. But I want to put it to a vote. I will call your name, and you will tell me where you think we should build our winter fort.”

Man-With-Red-Hair took out his paper book and a pencil and called each man’s name.

The captains could have told us where to go. York told me this.

But Man-With-Red-Hair said the American way was to vote.

York called it “democracy.”

One by one they voted when their names were called.

“York.”

York looked at Man-With-Red-Hair and smiled.

He was a slave.

A slave who voted.

“South shore, cap’n.” He stood tall when he said it.

“Janey.” Man-With-Red-Hair pointed his pencil at me.

All the Pretty People looked at me.

The Indian woman had a voice.

“I vote go where more Wapato roots.” My voice spoke English.

Man-With-Red-Hair [wrote my words in his book](#). This gave my heart great happiness.

I make him show me where my words are scratched. I trace them with my fingers and smile.

My words.

In a book.

Good medicine.

The majority voted for the south shore where there were more roots. That was where we would make our winter home.

The captains carved their names into trees to let others know they had been there.

If I knew how, I would carve my name, too.

##

The first thing the Pretty People built was a [smokehouse](#) to preserve meat for winter and our journey home.

But a fire doesn't burn when the sky weeps.

We were on the other side of the river. But two things tormented us still:

Fleas and rain.

Rain and fleas.

There were other troubles:

- Pryor's shoulder went out again.
- Gibson had diarrhea.
- Fields got boils on his leg.
- Werner strained his knee.
- York had colic.

We learned that the Clatsops rotated their houses to run from the fleas.

We could only build one fort. There was nowhere to run.

There was more elk on this side of the Columbia, but not enough for hungry men. I dug for [wapato](#) roots. The Pretty People traded for dogs, fish and [salal berry cakes](#).

Man-With-Red-Hair drew [our fort with four sides](#). Two rows of three rooms.

The men cut down trees and worked hard day after rain-soaked day. Hungry, sick, flea-bitten, wet, cold and tired, they pounded their axes.

I think there was hope in each swing to find shelter from the rain.

The night before the Pretty People's happy medicine day, I had a roof to share with Pompey, York, Charbonneau and Drouillard. The rain was hard. I was grateful for the snores of the men.

We were dry.

But we still had fleas.

### **December 25, 1805**

The men shot their guns early in the morning to wake the captains. Today was the day they called Christmas—the Pretty People's most important medicine day. It was the day when the Good Man came from heaven like a baby to take the bad medicine out of our hearts. I liked the stories about the Good Man named Jesus.

On this day the Pretty People gave each other gifts.

I gave Man-With-Red-Hair the gift I had worked on with Seaman since last winter: 24 white weasel tails. Seaman had helped me find them and catch them.

I did not have a gift for Captain Lewis.

The captains gave the Pretty People handkerchiefs and tobacco.

There was no food for feasting. The elk was spoiled. I could tell by the smell and I would not eat it.

Some of the Pretty People ate it anyway.

### **January 1, 1806**

Another medicine day.

The number one day.

They fired their guns and woke the captains again. It is a custom they practice, these Pretty People. They like the sounds of their guns.

**January 6, 1806**

The Clatsop brought roots, berries, three dogs and something they called [blubber](#).

“It’s from a giant fish.” Charbonneau explained.

Man-With-Red-Hair ordered two canoes to get ready to see the big fish. He did not ask me to go.

Just as he did not ask me to see the Big Waters.

Did he not see me? Was I a ghost or was I equal?

Had I not walked each step they walked? Suffered as they suffered?

Had my feet not been bruised and bleeding and yet I did not stop? Did I not itch with fleas and starve from lack of meat?

Had I brought peace to this tribe?

Had I found food for their empty stomachs?

Did I not show them which way to go?

Was it not my brother who gave them horses?

Did I not bathe their wounds, care for them as my own brothers?

And I had not yet seen the Big Waters? This great thing that we set our minds upon when our feet froze in the mountains? When we ate candles and leather belts and our fingers could not move?

When the buffalo ran toward us and the bear tried to eat us, did I not long to see the Big Waters, too?

Today I would not stay inside myself and be left behind.

I would stand and be equal.

I said these things to Man-With-Red-Hair.

And he did not look through me.

He invited me into his boat.



I put Pompey on my back and tucked his head inside his cradleboard so that the wind would not steal his ears.

I saw the great and terrible Big Waters called “Pacific Ocean,” an angry beast who would not rest.

Why did it fight with the earth?

I saw the great fish’s bones, already stripped by the Clatsop. I showed the remains to Pompey. I had never seen [bones taller than a lodge](#).

That is when Man-With-Red-Hair told me his medicine story called Jonah.

I was glad the big fish did not know my name.

### **January 1-March 22, 1806**

Everyone except Captain Lewis and Man-With-Red-Hair kept busy that winter making new clothes for the trip back home. The captains were too busy making maps and lists:

[Hedge bindweed](#)

[Big Skate](#)

[Fir leaf](#)

[Maple leaf](#)

[Fern leaf](#)

[Vulture](#)

[Pinecone](#)

[Eulachon](#)

[Sage Grouse](#)

[White Gull](#)

[Brant](#)

[White salmon trout](#)

*Clark's Map*

I took Pompey to Man-With-Red-Hair's room to show him a surprise.

"Look," I said in English. I put Pompey on the floor and he wobbled to Man-With-Red-Hair who cheered and scooped him up in his arms and danced him around the tiny room.

"You are a fine, fine boy, Pompey. Full of promise." Man-With-Red-Hair kissed my son.

I liked watching Pompey and Man-With-Red-Hair together. They reminded me of my life as a Shoshone girl, dancing with my father in the days before I became Hidatsa slave, then Charbonneau's woman.

I wished Charbonneau danced with Pompey.

I wished he rejoiced in his first steps.

There was much to do. I helped the Pretty People [make candles](#), and sew elk hides to make clothes for the trip home. Some of the Pretty People [boiled ocean water](#) for salt. I made Pompey a new cradleboard and new moccasins and clothes. He was getting bigger every day.

I was hungry for corn. My stomach felt empty and my bones showed through my clothes.

Pompey grew bigger while I grew smaller.

Fleas and rain.

Rain and fleas.

Hunger.

Fish.

Roots.

**March 23-August 14, 1806**

I was glad to leave the angry Big Waters, the fleas and the rain. Man-With-Red-Hair gave Fort Clatsop to the Indians who accepted it gladly. We hoped to never return to this place. I did not look behind me.

The river was twenty feet higher, Charbonneau said. The Chinooks up river were starving. The Salmon had not yet arrived. The Pretty People killed elk and deer but we did not have enough to save for later. They bought and ate dog.

Seaman ate deer entrails and mice.

One day while carrying our canoes past the Cascades in [Watlala](#) territory, the Indians threw stones at the exhausted Pretty People. It was a dangerous, narrow, slippery path. This was how the Watlalas said, "This is our land. We are in control."

That night while we slept they surrounded the camp and stole Seaman. Captain Lewis sent three men to find him.

Why did he not go himself?

Seaman was rescued when the three Pretty People threatened to shoot.

From that day on, the Pretty People kept their rifles ready while we moved in Watlala territory and we knew no more harm.

When we arrived to the land of the Walla Walla people, we traded for horses. Captain Lewis liked these people. I heard him say to Man-With-Red-Hair, "I think they are the most hospitable, honest, and sincere people that we have met with in our voyage."

We rowed back up the river to camp with our Nez Perce friends and waited for the snow to melt off the Bitterroot Mountains so that there would be grass for our horses to eat. While we waited, Man-With-Red-Hair helped the sick that the people brought to him from hundreds of miles away.

The Walla Wallas and the Yakamas watched York dance to the fiddle. We watched their many people dance until the moon rose above our heads.

That was when Pompey got sick.

"Heal him." I handed him to Man-With-Red-Hair.

“Pompey, your neck and jaw are swollen, dear boy.” Man-With-Red-Hair felt my son’s head. It burned hot with fever.

“Heal Pompey.” Tears spilled from my eyes.

Man-With-Red-Hair nodded. He boiled onions and placed them on his neck. He gave him medicine from the medicine box.

For five days I rocked baby and sang. My tears bathed his face. Man-With-Red-Hair never left us.

I did not sleep.

Pompey was not getting better.

He was getting worse.

# Chapter 15

Pompey was too weak to cry. For five days I prayed. I prayed to the Good Baby Jesus. I prayed to my parents. I prayed to Otter Woman. I begged the spirits to let my son live.

I begged Man-With-Red-Hair.

“Heal Pompey.”

Six days I prayed and Pompey looked at me with eyes that were empty no more. I felt his forehead. It was cool.

His neck and jaw were not as swollen.

“*Igá?*”

Pompey said, “Mama” in Shoshone.

Man-With-Red-Hair had tears on his cheeks. He did not think I saw them. They matched the ones that slid down mine.

##

Too soon we climbed the mountains and walked knee-deep in snow. Captain Lewis said it was 15 feet deep in the tall hills the wind makes. We could not go forward. We had to go back. I worried about Pompey. He was listless and hungry. His sickness was not all gone.

We waited four weeks in the prairie at the foot of the mountains. Captain Lewis said that it was a month, before we climbed the Bitterroots again.

This time the snow was not as deep but it was cold. My stomach shouted for corn and squash and buffalo. I worried that I could not feed Pompey. He needed his strength, too.

I felt strength leave my bones and pour out onto the mountain floor.

After the mountains we found [pools of hot water](#) to bathe in. Man-With-Red-Hair calls them “hot springs.” The Pretty People and Nez Perce guides soak first in the warm water then run to the cold river and jump in.

Again and again they jump naked into the river and back into the “hot springs.”

If I were a man, I would stay where it is warm.

##

Seaman runs from me to Captain Lewis.

From Lewis back to me.

He did not want to leave Pompey.

He did not want to leave his master, Captain Lewis.

But we were going to travel in a different way now, over the land with Man-With-Red-Hair, while Lewis went the way of the river.

“Go, Seaman.”

I gave him my permission.

This freed him to follow to his master.

Charbonneau and I traveled on horses with Man-With-Red-Hair and [Pryor](#), [Bratton](#), [Gibson](#), [Hall](#), [LaBiche](#), [Shannon](#), [Shields](#), [Windsor](#) and [York](#). We were to explore lands for Father Jefferson.

“That way.” I pointed to the [trail](#) I remembered when I was a Shoshone girl. Man-With-Red-Hair listened and we took our horses through it.

Now, my stomach was full of buffalo. My milk for Pompey was rich and I was much stronger. Pompey laughed and kicked and danced again.

But not our horses. They limped from the rough stones that cut and bruised their feet.

We made moccasins from buffalo hides for the horses. I tried not to smile at their feet covered like a man's. I had never seen horses wear socks before. But the horses did not know I laughed and their feet did not hurt as much.

Some of the horses were young and nervous and Charbonneau's threw him off. So did Gibson's and when he fell, a stick pierced his thigh like an arrow.

A bad wound.

"We will stop here and heal," said Man-With-Red-Hair. "And make canoes."

Like otters our new canoes glide through the [Yellowstone River](#). The current pushed us swiftly homeward.

I felt my stomach leap with joy.

Otter Woman—did she know I was near? Can she feel me coming?

Man-With-Red-Hair saw a big rock and made us stop. "I will be able to see a long way at the top of that rock." He took me and Pompey with him. It was a long climb.

On the side of the rock he [wrote his name beside](#) other pictures [drawn by the ancient ones](#).

"That is my name, Pompey." Man-With-Red-Hair pointed to the marks he made. "You will learn to write your name, too, after you go to school."

"School?" I did not know this word, "school." But if it taught how to make magic marks that speak a man's name, I wanted to go, too.

"I am naming this rock 'Pompey's Tower.' This is the name that will be on the map."

"Picture of rock?" I smile.

"Yes, Janey. With Pompey's name."

Man-With-Red-Hair took Pompey in his arms. "My boy, Pomp," he said.

And I knew.

Pompey was not only mine.

He was Charbonneau's, and Man-With-Red-Hair's, and Seaman's, and Otter Woman's and the entire Corps' little boy.

He would always be part of something more than I. He would have [many paths to walk](#).

I was not hungry anymore for buffalo. They bellowed all night and kept us awake. They crossed in front of our canoes and made us wait until they crossed the river.

Pompey pointed and laughed. He put his hands on his ears and made their sounds. Charbonneau made the sounds, too. Now that Pompey was older, he played with him more.

The mosquitoes ate us instead of fleas.

But at least there was not as much rain.

### **August 12, 1806**

A baby buffalo ran toward us. Pompey pointed and clapped. The small buffalo barked and ran back toward the white pirogue—the same white boat that we left behind on our trip to the Big Waters.

It was not a buffalo.

It was Seaman.

As the boat came closer, I saw Captain Lewis lying inside.

"I did it. I shot him." Peter's one eye had fooled him again. He thought the captain was a deer.

Captain Lewis smiled up at Man-With-Red-Hair. "I'll be fine. I just need to rest for a few weeks. It's not a fatal wound."

Seaman nudged my hand to say hello and I sat Pompey on the ground because he was reaching for the big dog—his friend from the time he was born.

Seaman licked Pompey's face and my son squealed and pulled at the gentle dog's ears. Seaman rolled on his back and Pompey sat on top of him while the Pretty People laughed.



But I did not laugh. There was something thick in my throat that made my heart heavy and my eyes ache with tears that would not come.

### **August 14, 1806**

The Pretty People rejoiced to go home to their tribes as I had gone home to mine.

Would things be different for them as it was for me when I went back to the Shoshone?

I did not want to say goodbye. Pompey had many brothers who loved him.

Man-With-Red-Hair tickled my boy and would not hand him back to me. “Let me take him to St. Louis, Charbonneau. The world is changing. He will need an education.”

Charbonneau shook his head. “The boy isn’t weaned. Give him a few more years and perhaps we’ll consider it.”

“Then come to St. Louis to live.” Man-With-Red-Hair looked into my eyes. His were like my blue beads. I did not want to let them go.

Man-With-Red-Hair kissed Pompey and handed him back to me. He touched my face.

“Goodbye, Janey. Thank you.”

Words stuck in my throat.

He jumped into the white pirogue as the Corps waved goodbye. Seaman sat in the front of the boat, sniffing the air.

The big dog did not know I would see him no more.

I crawled inside myself to embrace the hollow place left by Man-With-Red-Hair and Seaman; by York and Peter and Drouillard.

I handed Pompey to Otter Woman, turned away from the boats.

I wrapped my arms around my shoulders and walked alone to the cottonwoods.

Under the trees I sang:

*Ai yi, Ai yi,*

*You took me home*  
*You healed my son*  
*You showed me things I did not know*  
*You called me Janey and made me equal*  
*And did not let Charbonneau hit me.*  
*You gave me a voice.*  
*Together we starved,*  
*Together we saw the Big Waters.*

*The big dog took care of us*  
*And kept us warm when we were cold*  
*And fought the bear*  
*The buffalo he scared away from our door*  
*And let Pompey pull his ears and fur.*

*Ai yi, ai yi*  
*Man-With-Red-Hair is gone now,*  
*I cannot see his face.*  
*His blue eyes like my beads*  
*Live apart from me now*  
*And journey to places I cannot see.*  
*Gone.*  
*I cannot say goodbye.*  
*I cannot say hello.*

Back and forth. Back and forth.

I rocked myself until the hollow place inside exploded with my tears. A voice rose out of the thick place in my throat that I did not recognize.

A voice of sorrow that I had never before let speak.

The moon rose on my mourning.

Otter Woman wrapped me in a buffalo blanket and did not speak.

She knew this medicine must be done.

She had done the same when I'd left her, too.

# Chapter 16

## Epilogue

**March 26, 1811**

“I am neither a farmer nor a city man.” Charbonneau sat across the table from Captain Clark and put an “X” on the paper. The captain counted out \$100 and handed it to the fur trader.

Charbonneau had just sold his 320 acres earned as a member of the Corps of Discovery to the good captain and agreed to let Clark adopt his son, Jean Baptiste, the son of Sacagawea.

“Pompey will get a good education. I promise.”

Sacagawea looked into the blue eyes that she could never forget.

She trusted those eyes.

She had to. She had no say in business matters. She was equal as a member of the Corps of Discovery, but as a Native American, a woman, and the wife of Charbonneau, she was nothing more than property.

Sacagawea kissed Pompey goodbye and she and her husband boarded a barge bound for Fort Manuel Lisa Trading Post where Charbonneau would resume his work as a fur trader and Sacagawea would give birth to a daughter named Lisette.

One can't help but wonder at the sorrow that filled her heart as she left her son.

Shortly after the birth of her daughter at Fort Manuel in Kenel, South Dakota, Sacagawea died.

Did she die of a broken heart? Had the inner strength that had sustained her through her journeys with the Corps of Discovery been tapped one too many times?

John Luttig, a clerk of the Missouri Fur Company, wrote in his journal on Sunday, December 20, 1812: *"this evening the wife of Charbonneau ...died of a putrid fever, she was a good woman and the best in the fort, aged abt 25 years she left a fine infant girl."*

Captain Clark also adopted Lisette and raised Sacagawea's children as his very own.

Pompey went to the finest schools as Captain Clark promised and even traveled in Europe with Duke Friedrich Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg, the nephew of King Friedrich I Wilhelm Karl of Württemberg where he learned to speak Spanish and German.

He is the only child to ever be depicted on U.S. currency. His and his mother's likeness appear on the [U.S. Sacagawea dollar coin](#).

Pompey died on [May 16, 1866](#).

*The End*

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Dear Reader,

It has been an incredible honor and privilege to share with you the life and journey of one of America's most admired women, Sacagawea. More landmarks, sculptures, monuments, memorials and honors have been given her than any other woman in our country's history.

Sacagawea captured my imagination for many of the same reasons it has captured other historians throughout the ages. I can't help but admire her stoic bravery and heroic strength. Her endurance in insurmountable circumstances is the stuff of best-selling novels and Oscar-winning movie scripts. And yet, she lived through tremendous trials without one negative opinion having been expressed regarding her character. She was in all her ways, a truly remarkable woman.

All the characters of this book and the circumstances of the Lewis and Clark expedition in this story are real and true. Because so little was written about Sacagawea in the Corps' journals, I used literary license to create dialogue and emotions that I believed could have taken place.

Some may wonder why I have chosen to spell her name with a "g" instead of a "j." One reason is because that is the way it was spelled in the Corps' journals. Another reason is because that is how it was pronounced when Captains Lewis and Clark met her. Her name in Hidatsa language means "bird woman."

The "j" spelling occurred after the editor of the 1814 narrative of the journals, Nicholas Biddle, transcribed it as a "j" instead of a "g." No one knows why. He had never met Sacagawea and therefore did not know that she herself pronounced her name with the hard "g" sound in the middle.

While some historians have tried to prove that the "j" in the name is a Shoshone word meaning "boat pusher," [Dr. Sven Liljeblad](#), professor of linguistics, emeritus, at Idaho State University in Pocatello, analyzed the word "Sacajawea" and concluded that "it is unlikely that Sacajawea is a Shoshoni word....The term for 'boat' in Shoshoni is saiki, but the rest of the alleged compound would be incomprehensible to a native speaker of Shoshoni."

Some North Dakota Hidatsa have erected a [memorial](#) spelling her name as "Sakakawea." I chose not to spell her name this way because that is not the way it was spelled in the journals. The United States Geographic Names Board, the National Park Service, the National Geographic Society, and several encyclopedias, use the form "Sacagawea."

Mystery surrounds her death but the entry by John Luttig in his diary that Sacagawea was "the best woman at the fort" is a testament to the fine character she portrayed throughout her short life. Her remarkable ability to adapt to her environment and to find peace in the worst of circumstances inspires me. I hope it will inspire you, as well.

Any mistakes in dates or fictional depictions of character are wholly mine.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. I must admit, as I wrote the last words to her biography, I was sad to say goodbye to this fair lady. I had grown quite fond of her. I sincerely hope that she would be pleased with the way she has been portrayed in these pages.

In His Service,  
[Karla Akins](#)

## About the Author:

Karla Akins is a pastor's wife, mother of five and grandmother of five girls. She makes her home in North Manchester, Indiana with her husband, Eddie, pastor of [Christian Fellowship Church](#), her adult twin sons with autism, her mother-in-law with Alzheimer's and three rambunctious dogs. Karla is the author of [O Canada Her Story](#), [Jacques Cartier](#) and the novel, *The Pastor's Wife Wears Biker Boots* due out in 2013. She is represented by Linda Glaz of Hartline Literary Agency. Karla is available for speaking engagements through her website, [KarlaAkins.com](#).

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To God be the glory forever and ever!

Amen.

