

NEIKO ADVENTURE SAGA

BOOK ONE



NEIKO'S  
FIVE LAND  
ADVENTURE

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## Chapter 1

There was a girl who lived in Loganville, Georgia. You would probably believe she was the average teenage girl, but she wasn't. She was extremely shy and quiet, but she had many friends that were outside acquaintances and Indian peers from the hidden land of Hawote, which coexisted with the state. The inhabitants of Hawote had lives similar to hers in how they lived double lives. She went to school just like most ordinary people, but there were things that separated her from the norm, and no one knew about these things, not even her parents because of a rigid code of secrecy in Hawote.

Most of the normal world knew her name to be Amanda Kathrine Hawk, but in her other life she was Captain Neiko Kidd. All the years of her life were spent in living this double life, and she juggled it pretty well; no one suspected, not her close friend Jennifer who lived in Rome or her even close cousin Jessica because she did well in keeping the secret. In both worlds she was the same in looks. She was a fairly short, eighteen-year-old girl with long, black hair, green eyes, and a slim, muscular build. In some ways she was more mature for her age, but in other ways she was not.

Her immaturity came from still playing with toys. She did this because she had trouble letting go of her childhood as well as being able to immerse herself into the imaginary world in an uncanny way. This was an escape from her stressful double life. Other reasons may have been about teen rebellion, losing some of her childhood to being a warrior, and she was a nerd at heart. Because of this double life, she did not do normal the things that teenagers like to do, and for the most part, normal teenage activities bored her, except for going hunting, fishing or camping with her Indian friends or her family. Neiko's friends understood her in this area of her life, but Neiko's parents, especially her mom, was not happy about her playing with toys at this age. Her mom constantly got onto her about this. Neiko's tribal friends more supportive in the matter since she had lost part of her childhood to war and since they knew the truth,

In the world of Amanda Hawk, she was a high school senior who was ready to bust out in the grown world and attend college. She made As in school and had many friends; she dealt with the pains all people had to deal with in school. She didn't go places very much with her outside acquaintances, but she mostly hung out with her Indian peers and stayed close to her family. She was in the high school band where she dealt with most of these pains, but managed to play the French horn without any additional

headache. Amanda had a peaceful home life, and she lived close to most of her relatives. She attended church regularly and played for the church. All of this masked her other life.

This other life was much more turbulent; the world of Captain Neiko Kidd was not so peaceful. She was the commanding officer of the Desert Storm Falcons, an organization of woodland warriors, and she was a friend with most of the other tribes who were on the same side. The surname “Kidd” was coined by one of her friends as a joke since she was known as “Neiko the Kid” due to her young age and for some coincidental relations of her heroic deeds in how they vexed their enemies were somewhat likened those of the legendary privateer William Kidd. The name stuck. People in Hawote usually didn’t have last names.

Neiko, as well as the others, was in constant gridlock with the Crackedskulls, a band of bloodthirsty savages ruled by Raven and Bloodhawk, who were even worse than their followers. Neiko was always a thorn in their side; she always ruined their plans of conquest of the Desert Storm Falcons. She even liberated the ones that were conquered and made them fight their oppressors. On top of all this, she was also a skilled warrior and an expert leader to the tribes; she fought along with them and trained the young. She was fluent in each of the languages of the tribes, so she had constant relations with each tribe. As one would think, the Crackedskulls despised Neiko, and this was true except at the top of the ladder.

Most would believe Raven and Bloodhawk would be the ones to hate her most, but just as much as she was a pain, she was beautiful. Bloodhawk, Raven’s son, was hopelessly in love with her; Raven approved his choice, but Neiko hated the Crackedskull with every ounce of her being. Many times in battle, Crackedskull warriors were ordered to capture her, and every attempt failed. Other times they sent their best men to kidnap her, but they failed as well. Neiko always made it home in time for dinner; she would always tell her mom and dad she had been strolling in the woods when she was really having a battle or a secret meeting. This constant threat of Crackedskull attack was the main reason why Neiko could not participate in normal teenage activities with outsiders since the Crackedskulls could camouflage themselves just like the other inhabitants of Hawote to attack. No one from her family knew that these people existed.

Prior to her life in Loganville, she lived in heavily wooded areas; this is also when she discovered her tribal roots at a very young age, but she now lived in a subdivision with barely any trees. Woods were across the main road to the left of her house, but she was not permitted to enter them, so most of

her fighting time was cut short. School was also taking up the rest of her time, so she only got to hear the stories and plan the next move. Meetings were hard to schedule due to the visibility and her busy schedule. She had to set them up when she had time; she had to find a fairly concealed areas, which were few. She could use her room when her parents were not home, so meetings were short these days. When things were boring, she read a book, played video games, played with her animals, went somewhere, or she played with her toys, which consisted of: the Attack Pack, a group of animals and people that were brought together by hardships, the Skull Bearers, who were part of the Imperial army of Ramses, the archenemy. In these crazy times the story begins.

“Oh, yeah, that’ll be great! I’ll be there in a few minutes,” Neiko said into the phone, talking to her cousin Jessica with enthusiasm. “What do you want me to bring? Killer Instinct, Donkey Kong, which one? Three? Okay, anything else? The Attack Pack, any bad guys? Ramses and who else? Osiris, Menes, and five others, okay see ya, bye!” she said and she hung up the phone. Jessica, Neiko’s nine-year-old cousin, had arranged for her to spend the night with her, and Neiko’s parents agreed. After she got everything packed, she then remembered the meeting scheduled for that afternoon. “Oh crap! I better tell Monganata right away that I ain’t able to come,” she said thinking out loud. She looked under her bed and pulled out the phone she uses to call her tribal friends, which her mom knew nothing about. She pulled back her Fireball Island board game and pulled out the phone and dialed the numbers to reach Monganata; his phone began to ring. “C’mon pick up! Oh, I hope he hasn’t left yet,” Neiko whispered hopefully.

The phone was picked up and a woman answered, “Hello!?”

“Hello, Windsong, it’s me Neiko. Is Mongie still there? I need to speak with him right away, it’s urgent.”

“Yes, he is. You just caught him,” said Windsong, Monganata’s sweet wife. Then she asked, “Neiko, how are you? Is everything all right? I’m terribly worried about you.”

“Yeah, everything’s fine, and there’s no need to worry, there’s no big crisis going on,” replied Neiko reassuringly.

“That’s good,” she said relieved. “Oh, here’s Mongie. Take care, you hear?”

“I will,” said Neiko smiling as she heard the rustle of the phone in the background when Windsong handed the phone to Monganata, the leader of the Chang Battlehawks who was also Neiko’s mentor.

“Hello?” asked Monganata.

“Hey, Mongie, it’s me Neiko. I was just calling to tell you that I’m not coming to the meeting this afternoon.”

“Well, thanks for telling me, but why did you change your mind on such short notice, especially since this meeting was very important?”

“I know. My cousin called me, and she wanted me to spend the night with her and help her out. You know she’s having such a hard time, and I have so much fun with her. Everything was planned just a few minutes ago.”

“I understand completely, but you know the Grand High Mohican won’t be very happy about this. Oh, and by the way, Sigma had a surprise for you at this meeting. You need to stop with the teenage rebellious streak and skipping meetings so you can get the scoop on the latest battles and all.” Sigma was the chief of the Scraah Wareagles.

“I know. What surprise did Sigma have for me? I’m eager to know!”

“I’m sure you do, but if I tell you, then it won’t be a surprise.”

“Aw, you ol’ party pooper. Did you say the Grand High Mohican was coming too?!” The Grand High Mohican was the chief of the Mohican-Sparra, a conglomerate tribe made up of two smaller tribes, who was named Francesco. This was the only chieftain that Neiko had problems with. Everyone always wondered why he had such a strange name for an Indian chieftain and was often razzed about it with Neiko being among them.

“Yes.”

“Awww, I didn’t ask that goat-sniffing oaf to come to this meeting, and man, I hate that guy.”

“I know—” before he could finish, Neiko interrupted.

“I hate him more than Raven and Bloodhawk put together! And if he comes to meetings for the next fifty years, then I’ll skip all of ‘em!”

“Now, now, that’s not the way to be.”

“But still—” before she could finish a red Camaro drove up and her mom called and said,

“They’re here! Do you have everything packed?” her mom asked.

Neiko answered, “Yeah, just about. I still need to put my shoes on!”

“Well, hurry up!” she called out.

“Mongie, gotta go. Meet me at the big oak tomorrow at 6:30 sharp and tell me what happens.”

“Alright, have fun,” Monganata said, then hung up.

Neiko did the same, and she threw the phone under the bed, tossed Fireball Island in its original spot, and made a lot of noise doing so.

“What’s going on in there?” her mom asked.

Neiko remembered she couldn’t find Ramses, and she replied, “I was—”

um, trying to find Ramses, and I can't find him. Have you seen him?"

"Who?!" her mom asked, confused.

"He's the guy with silver armor, red eyes, and a purple cape. I left him on the bed yesterday, and now I can't find him."

"I don't remember seeing him," she replied.

"Well, darn. I guess this will have to do, but I could've swore—"

Neiko mused as she kicked her foot under the bed in a disgusted manner, but she stubbed her toe on something.

"Owww! What in blazes—" she said, then lifted the bed skirt and looked what stubbed her toe. There lay Ramses on his back staring blankly into the box springs with his dagger in his left hand, which was raised to stab some unknown victim. His purple cape was draped to his right on the floor. She picked him up and looked to make sure nothing was missing and said, "There you are, Monster Gas, I wondered where you went to—Mom I found him! No need to send the search party."

"Okay," she replied.

Neiko took the dagger out of the archvillain's hand and put it in the sheath in his belt and fixed his cape, and gave him the once over. Even though he was just a toy, Ramses was sinister-looking. From the top of his head to his feet, he was the most elaborately colored and complicated to describe. The majority of him was black and silver, with blue and red stuck in random places. Every inch of him was covered in armor except his eyes, which were two pools of red fury. His chest to his lower torso was covered in silver. On his shoulder blades he had two silver wing-like plates flaring out in both directions. His arms were covered in black with red stripes on his wrists. He had a red spike on each elbow and blue plates just below the elbow on the outside of each arm. He had a silver hand guard on each hand and underneath these were black gloves. On the back of the upper part of the arms, there was a dull silver section and another on the outside part of the arm. His legs were black up to his kneecaps that had a large, skull knee guards with spikes, and the rest of his legs were silver. His face was silver across his nose, cheeks, and forehead. In the center of his forehead he had two black horns trimmed in silver pointing up and just clearing the top of the head and his silver pharaoh's headdress which flared from both his shoulders to both sides of his head. He had a black plate protecting his mouth and chin, and it had a silver stripe down the middle. The temples were black and separated by a wide, silver stripe. His feet were covered with heavy, armored shoes. Even though his armor was just plastic, the shiny, silver paint that covered most of him made him look metallic. His eyes had a frozen glare of hate and one that

would scare Satan himself. The sinister belt he wore around his waist had two sheaths that held his sword and dagger.

The sword had a long and slender blade with a slanted tip and sharp point to one side; it was like a razor the rest of the way. It had a long handle; the sword was so long that it almost touched the floor when it was sheathed while he was standing.

The dagger was much shorter than the sword, and it had a curved blade and a sharp point at the end. These weapons were sheathed on the backside of Ramses' waist. His magnificent weapons were nothing more than dull, red plastic that was not painted.

Neiko found nothing missing for the second time, and she threw him in her overnight bag with his friends and foes, and threw her clothes on top of him and zipped the bag. Neiko slipped on her shoes, just as her cousin ran into the bedroom.

“Hey, Adnama, I missed you,” said Jessica happily.

“Hey. Well, Acissej, are you ready for some fun?” “Yeah!” she said.

“Alright, let's go!”

Both of them ran from the room into the living room where Neiko hugged her parents, then they dashed to the car and climbed in. The car backed down the driveway and started down the road.

## Chapter 2

While the car was leaving, Raven and Bloodhawk watched from the woods.

“What’s going on?” asked Bloodhawk.

“It looks like Neiko is missing another meeting,” replied Raven, his father.

“That’s good, but why is she missing so many?” he asked.

“I don’t know, but I’m sure Francesco will have the honor in telling us. A rebellious streak would be my first guess.”

“When is he going to come? I’m getting sick of waiting on that poor excuse for a man—I’m ready to plan and take action now!”

“Patience, my son. You’ll get the chance. Besides, we need to know their plans, and the meeting has just started,” said Raven, smiling at his impatient son.

“You’re right. But I’m so tired of watching Neiko go free. I’m so anxious to get her, bring her to the castle, and make her my queen. I would love the opportunity of kidnapping her myself.”

“Of course you do, but you couldn’t possibly sneak into that neighborhood without being seen or causing panic among the neighbors. Then the Seven Tribes would be on you like flies on day old carrion. You wouldn’t want that would you?”

“No, I could just shanghai her from her cousin’s house tonight when it’s dark, when she is sleeping.”

“Now, you know that won’t work either because you can’t fit in that house, you would be seen, panic will spread, and you may be caught and made into a circus attraction. Besides, you don’t know how long she will stay up. She stayed up just about all night once, remember? Bloodhawk, use your head like I taught you. You must not let your heart overpower your head. Just think, in a matter of months she will be in college and then getting her will be a snap. No one will know what happened, and it will be too late. College will separate her from everyone, and you can find the opportunity, and she will be yours.”

“Well maybe, but then she may be even more of a nuisance if she has too much time on her hands when college starts. So if I grab her now, then that’ll be all she wrote. Then she would be out of the way and be mine at the same time.”

“Very good, that’s the way. Both have their drawbacks and advantages, and you nailed them both, I’m proud. You know, you’re right. We do need to get her out of the way so we can conquer the Seven Tribes, but she needs to be

safe; not in our custody till after we win. But at the same time be where she will be easy to retrieve, and be out of the way. But I have no idea how to do all of those at the same time.”

“Father, I don’t believe we can do *all* of them at the same time; we may have to give a little, but we can think of something that can put her out of commission. Her safety will be assured, but if we do decide to take her, then she won’t be too badly missed.”

Raven cocked his head in a questioning manner, looked at him blankly, and asked, “What are you getting at?”

“Well, like—um, if we made her look like a traitor, then her friends won’t miss her if she disappears suddenly. And they will think she ran away because she couldn’t stand the heat. Only we will know she is innocent, and we don’t have to worry about any suspicions or rescues; she will be out of the way, safe, and our helpless prisoner. When we win, they will never see her again and never know what happened or what hit them.”

Raven rubbed his hands together and smiled devilishly. “Oh, I get it. Try to ruin her reputation so that no one will believe her if something happens or if she finds out one of our secrets, and at the right time, get her. Good thinking, but there are a few problems with this.”

“Like what?” he asked frustrated.

“First, there will be few to believe that she would be capable of treachery; for those who are convinced, these believers will meddle, find the truth, and clear her name. Second, *if* we do take her, then her parents will be missing her. Also, people will discover that we are responsible and make a war to rescue her. You have the right idea of making tension between Neiko and her friends, but we need to take it a step further. We need to think of something to make tension with *everybody*. This includes her parents as well.”

“How will we make her guilty of treason in front of her parents? Eighteen-year-olds don’t sell important documents to enemy countries of the U.S.”

Raven laughed. “No, no. Not treason. We need to make a different approach.”

“Like what?! Treason is the most terrible crime I could think of. Should we try murder?”

“No. There is no need for a crime. All we need is something small and simple, but at the same time extremely damaging to reputation, mood, and friendships.”

“What are you suggesting?”

“I’m not sure yet, but it will come to me, and when it does, we will start to

plan.”

“Goodie, I can’t wait,” laughed Bloodhawk cruelly.

Francesco came in running and complaining. “Crazy bunch of heathens! I can’t believe they didn’t plan anything. Who needs that wretch anyway?” he said moodily. “I’m terribly sorry, your majesties, but the meeting ran late thanks to Monganata and his stupid wife.”

Ignoring the rest, Bloodhawk and Raven thought of the same idea and pointed at each other and said in unison, “Crazy, that’s it!”

Francesco didn’t have a clue and asked, “What is it?”

Raven chuckled and looked at him and said, “Francesco, you’re a genius!”

“I still don’t understand. What’s so great about a crazy bunch of heathens?” he asked, frustrated. Francesco was a slender man, not very tall, with black hair and blue eyes. He was the Grand High Mohican, and he was wearing the traditional headdress of falcon feathers and a robe of rabbit fur. He always had a weakling appearance and an annoying high-pitched voice. His weakness was one hundred times more obvious when he was lined up with the massive monarchs.



Raven stood nine feet from head to toe and had an enormous build. His

armor was titanium scale mail made from professional Crackedskull craftsmanship. His breastplate was made from silver and gold-colored titanium discs that overlapped each other to form a solid surface. The armor on his arms and legs was made of gold-colored titanium. His helmet was the most exquisite. The part in the back was gold titanium fixed with eagle feathers. The part around his eyes had outstretched wings of a bird of prey in a swoop that was elaborately colored in gold, silver, and white titanium. The part covering his nose was the hooked titanium beak that was colored as the beak of an eagle, and the remainder of his face was bare. His hands were bare, except at the end of his fingers where there were gold titanium finger guards that had retractable gold titanium claws.

Bloodhawk was much larger than his father, standing at eleven feet and having a build four times larger than his father was; he was also the largest in his entire bloodline. His armor was made exactly like Raven's except it was colored black and silver. These two were not like any normal men; they were mostly human, but partly bird. Both had feet of eagles complete with talons that remained unarmored. Their eyes were like an eagle's in looks; they could see like an eagle in the day and like an owl at night. Both of them possessed a pair of wings. Raven had a wingspan of fifteen and a half feet and colored with beautiful white plumage. Bloodhawk had solid black wing plumage and an eighteen and three quarter foot wingspan.

Raven told the Grand High Mohican, who was actually a Crackedskull, about the plot against Neiko.

Francesco's mood changed. "So that's the plan and where does 'crazy' come in?" he asked, perplexed.

"Aaah, that's the part we build on. If we can ever make Neiko seem she is suffering from lunacy, then most of our plans will go into effect, and the Seven Tribes will fall," replied Raven.

"So, then what? What happens to Neiko? Even if no one listens to her, she is still a walking time bomb ready to explode and a constant threat even then!" Francesco said in a worried way.

"Don't get so excited. Once she is having problems with her family and friends and trying to make everyone believe her, then we will step in and *remove* her. Then we will wage full war on the Tribes, and it will be finally over," replied Raven.

Francesco smiled evilly and rubbed his hands together. "So you mean you'll off her? That sounds nice."

Bloodhawk stood up and glared at him with hate. Francesco scrunched back in fright, and Bloodhawk fanned his fingers and his claws shot out of his

finger guards. The already terrified man covered his head with his arms and curled into a ball. Bloodhawk raised his hand ready to swipe, and Raven threw his hand up. “No! Don’t. We have no need for this. We will not harm Neiko; we will take her away and by then no one will really miss her. She will no longer be a threat to you once we have her. Then we will take care of the rest.”

Francesco uncurled himself, shaking. “Alright, but h-h-how do we take care of her before the opportune time? I mean, she will give me headaches till then, and she will still have access to the army even then! What if she finds something out, like me being a Crackedskull? I mean, if it is proven, then I will lose my position, and your plans of conquest and my espionage will be shot.”

Raven scratched his chin. “Well, I can’t do anything about the headaches she will give you, but you can handle the rest yourself except the abduction part.”

“But how? How can I deny her from the army? By the way, who will be the kidnapers, and how will you keep it under wraps?” he asked, confused.

“Francesco, Francesco. Have you forgotten your power? You have the power to disband her against anyone’s say-so, even Monganata’s. But, you must have full evidence of her phony lunacy so that no one has a just argument. The rest is to be taken care of by you. That’s your job. Keep us informed of the progress of our plan, and the next strategic moves are also your job. As for the kidnapping, I don’t know who will do that job. As for further planning, we will keep you informed of any changes.”

Before Francesco could say anything, Bloodhawk stood up. “I’ll do it! I’ll be the one who will kidnap her! This is a one-shot deal and no room for mistakes. She is no match for me, and I won’t fail. I won’t leave until she is my prisoner! Besides, I’ve been waiting for the chance to get my hands on her!”

Raven rubbed his chin and thought. “Alright, my son. That is a splendid idea, and a very good point. You get your chance. We will have to plan later on when and how you will move in with no problems from anyone, especially that thorn in your side Monchiska—that pain in the butt.”

Monchiska was the son of Sigma and Puma from the Scraah tribe and one of Neiko’s best friends.

Bloodhawk bared his teeth menacingly. “If anyone gets in my way from claiming my bride to be, then I will bathe them in their own blood!”

Francesco shuddered and felt a little sorry for anyone who crossed the path of this eleven-foot, angry Crackedskull prince; he hated it when his

temper flared up and when he made death threats. He finally broke the silence saying, “Well, um—uh...sorry to bother you two, but...um, I was thinking, um—”

“Come on, spit it out, Francesco! Stop doddering!” Raven snapped with a tone that was so sharp and whip-like that he jumped.

“Well, what are we exactly going to use to make Neiko look like a lunatic? I mean, we need something that everyone knows about, especially her parents—and how are we going to find it?” he managed to ask fighting the knot in his throat.

Raven stopped and thought and thought. “I can’t think of anything. What do you have in mind?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t the slightest idea, but there has to be something —”

“Well, find it. That will be your second job.”

“What if she gets in my hair and—”

“Do what you have to do to throw her off and get to work—NOW! If you do find something, then contact me as soon as possible. Then we will plan what to do next; in the meantime, be patient. You have a lot of work to do. Try to keep Neiko under control. She will give you many pains, so be prepared.”

Francesco bowed to them and turned to leave, and Bloodhawk called after him in a harsh warning, “Neiko better not be harmed or have even a scratch, or I’ll make you my scratching post!”

He shuddered as he left the woods near the road and hearing the blood-curdling warning. Many thoughts went through his mind of all the work that must be done, and all of Bloodhawk’s curses and threats that he had hanging over his head. He knew he must keep his cool and work fast, too. He had to keep the world from falling around him, since there was a small strand of string keeping the wrath of the Crackedskull monarchs and the chieftains from the Seven Tribes from consuming him. Neiko was one of these chieftains, and she was slicing at this strand. *Oh, if only I could clap my hands and Neiko be gone and married to Bloodhawk, then this nightmare would be over, or just easier to cope with,* he thought. He walked into his home and breathed a long sigh of relief. *Home sweet home,* he thought then shuddered because Bloodhawk’s threat began to ring in his ears.

“I’m so tired,” he muttered. Without changing out of the robe, he flopped on the bed and fell asleep instantly.

## Chapter 3

Neiko jumped out of the car and danced around upon arriving from her cousin's. Then she turned and waved good-bye to her uncle, aunt, and cousin as they pulled out. Her mother greeted her as she entered the house. She told her of all the events, and then said, "I need to put this stuff up."

"Alright, honey," she said, smiling.

Neiko entered her room, threw her bag on the bed, and looked at the clock on her nightstand; it read: 4:30 p.m.

*Plenty of time*, she thought. She put everything where it was supposed to go, and she hung up the clothes her mom had thrown on her bed. The last thing she did was put up her toys. The last toy she got out was Ramses. She held him by his left foot and positioned him to face her. She stuck her tongue at him, giggled, and stuffed him in the fortress which was inside her closet.

After she finished all of her chores, she looked at her watch. "Only five o'clock? Man, I did all that in thirty measly minutes?" she grumbled. "Oh, well, I guess I'll just have to play Killer Instinct till about six, then go meet Mongie at the oak."

At six she turned off her game and went into the living room, she told her mom that she was going outside for a while, and then she asked, "When's supper going to be ready?"

"In about an hour," her mom said.

Oh good, one full hour. That's all the time I need, Neiko mused to herself.

Neiko reached the oak fifteen minutes early, but Monganata was already there waiting. Neiko looked at him and then at her watch. "You're early. What's up?"

"Not much. Nothing was happening at home, and Windsong had to run errands, so I came early. You're pretty early yourself. So why are you early?"

"Well, kinda the same thing, I guess. I finished my chores, then I played video games for an hour, and then I came out here to get some air."

So what happened at the meeting?"

"Actually, you didn't miss anything. It was a *very* boring meeting. No one planned anything, no Crackedskull advancements, and nothing really important was discussed, except a weapon theft—nothing alarming or anything that you would be interested in. Mainly the rest was listening to the Grand High Mohican talk the entire time. Oh, yeah, Sigma was so disappointed you didn't come. He told me to tell you he won't accept any more rain checks on that surprise. He said he will drag you to the next meeting kicking and screaming if he has to, and Puma said she would help."

Puma was Sigma's wife.

Neiko chuckled. "He said that, huh?" she asked, smiling. "Well, I guess I will be coming to the next meeting, or you will have to save me from the terrible Sigma and Puma. Well, about that theft, who were the conspirators, and did they catch 'em?"

Monganata smiled. "I guess I will, and yeah, they did catch them. They were two Crow twins: Rasputin and Napoleon. They stole three pikes and four tomahawks. We managed to catch them at Yahweh's Ridge. We arrested them, put the weapons in the armories and put them away. They were also charged with other thefts as well."

Neiko whistled. "Man, they're regular pros then, huh? Boy, I wished I coulda helped you bust 'em. Oh, by the way, are they fans o' Bloodhawk and Raven? If they are, I would like to go tell their mummies and give 'em a good thrashing. Besides, ain't the Crows our friends now?"

"Well, no one knows for sure if they are tied in with the Crackedskulls or not. The Crows are our friends except that secret society the Black Hand, who Calling Wolf, the Crow chief, has tried to banish or disband."

Neiko whistled. "Really? I didn't think Calling Wolf would actually turn someone out even if they didn't fly right."

Monganata sighed. "That bunch has done more than just steal weapons, Neiko. They have sent him threats and attempts on Calling Wolf's life, and they have sent threats to various tribes. They even did the despicable act of kidnapping Calling Wolf's family, and holding them for ransom, saying: *If you don't leave, we will kill them.* I helped him save his family from spear point. I stung the gang, and Calling Wolf hasn't had too many threats since. There hasn't been too much activity from them except weapon thefts."



“Wow, are you sure they’re not affiliated with the Crackedskulls? I mean they seem like some of Raven’s company. When did you have the run in with this gang, and who’s the big enchilada?”

“Gosh, Neiko, no one has asked me about that in a while. Well, there has never been any evidence of them working for Raven, and I put them in their place about twenty-five years ago. The Black Hand had two ringleaders and their names were Quick Death and Night Crawler. I’m not real sure they are still alive, and if they are, they haven’t really done anything rash in a long time. Sometimes I wonder if I’ll hear from them again someday.”

“How did you know those two punks were from that gang? Are there any other secret societies in any of the other tribes?”

“Well, I could tell from their actions; like when they spit in Monchiska’s face when he asked them a simple question. I checked their left arm because they have a specific mark on their left arm, and they both had it along with that violent, rash behavior of theirs which is typical of a Hand member.”

“What does the mark look like?” asked Neiko. “So I know if I ever see it.”

“Well, um—” mused Monganata, rubbing his chin as he gathered his

thoughts. “It’s a Black Hand holding a dagger covered in blood, and the dagger has a cobra handle; the cobra has a hood and an open mouth ready to strike. The mark is usually located on the upper arm on the outside, like under where a short sleeve shirt would cover it. Sometimes it’s on the inside of the lower arm where only a good, trained eye could see it. As for any other lethal societies, there may be a few, but they’re not as bad as the Black Hand except for the Crackedskulls that is,” replied Monganata.

“Man, has Calling Wolf had any more problems from them, and why were they trying to run him off or kill him?” asked Neiko, confused.

“No,” Monganata replied and went on to explain, “The only problems he has are from armed robberies or hijackings, and no one usually gets hurt. As for the rest of your question, I’m not really sure. The best way I can answer it is by saying they’re like the Ku Klux Klan. They usually attack in disguise, so no one will suspect them, and they have a lot of codes and mysterious rules that they follow. But, I don’t really know anything about them. Now they are almost obsolete, and I’m glad because I hated it when I met Night Crawler. I had a duel with him; I took his left eye and slashed him several times in the face and once in the neck with my knife. He gave me this.” Monganata pulled up his sleeve showing a long, ugly scar. “He gave me this with his knife. After I almost killed him, he ran away, and I haven’t heard from him or his brother since.”

“If you had a rematch with that creep, I bet you would kick his butt,” said Neiko, smiling.

“Really? Gosh, that was long ago. Even then, I was in my thirties, and they were only in their late teens or early twenties. Now I’m a fifty-year-old and a little too old for that type of combat and heroic stuff.”

“Gee, you don’t look fifty, you look pretty good for an *old* guy, besides you barely have any gray, and you probably got those from me,” said Neiko kindly.

Monganata smiled warmly. “Well, you know how to flatter me and make me feel better. I appreciate the compliment.” Monganata was a tall man with a stout build and in excellent shape for a fifty-year-old. He had long, black hair with two wide stripes of gray in the front. His skin was tan and he had large black eyes. He had a somewhat aged appearance with lots of energy and stamina.

They laughed together a few minutes, and Neiko’s mother called for dinner. They said their goodbyes and went their separate ways.

## Chapter 4

Francesco was suddenly awakened by a knock at his door. “Who could that be?” he grumbled to himself. He stomped down the stairs and opened the door.

Wolfgang, a Scraah messenger, stood there smiling. Wolfgang was a young, cheerful twenty-year-old who was always sent to deliver important messages for Sigma to other chieftains. “Good morning, sir. I came at Sigma’s command to inform you of the meeting scheduled for the twenty-fifth. He said you must attend,” Wolfgang said in his casual, polite manner.

“What’s so good about this morning? And look what time it is! You interrupted my beauty sleep. I’m so tired of these stupid meetings,” Francesco snapped angrily.

“Well, I apologize, sir, but Sigma wanted me to inform you at once. And, it’s eight o’clock—it’s kinda late. Well then, I must be on my way. Good day, sir.”

As Wolfgang walked away, Francesco spat in his path. He slammed the door as he walked inside. In his tired, angry frenzy, he remembered his instructions from the Crackedskull chieftains. “Oh, what am I gonna use to nail that annoying Desert Storm Falcon? I can’t think of *anything*. Rocks? No that’s stupid... Sticks? No, no, no. Argh! I can’t think of anything to make her look insane, but at first talking rocks sounded good, but that’s too dumb. I need something more practical, close to home, and something Neiko sees on a regular basis, but it still sounds like rocks. Weapons chasing her? No! I give up,” he said as he kicked a small toy across the floor that belonged to Monganata’s small grandson.

“Owww! Stupid toys! I have them all in my house thanks to Monganata and his little, bratty grandson—” An idea came into his mind and interrupted his tirade. “Toys! That’s it! No one would ever believe in a toy coming to life, and no one would expect it! Francesco, you’re a genius! Which one, though? She has so many—dinosaurs, men, mutants, strange, changing creatures. Dinosaurs and creatures chasing her?! No, men sound much more reliable. Most of those men look so strange. Should I use one or many? One should be enough. Who should I use—Rahzar? No. Coldstone, Mace, Axe, Tusk—no. What I need is a leader—a Pharaoh. There are five of them: Osiris, Re, Tut, Menes, but what is the other one’s name? I know it starts with R. He is extremely special; I’ll use him, I suppose. What *is* his name? Oh well, I suppose it’ll come to me; meanwhile, I’ll need to go to Neiko’s and find that little man, so Raven can plan what to do next. I hope he has magic to bring

toys to life.”

Francesco walked casually from his home to Neiko’s neighborhood. He cautiously looked around for any signs of anyone. There were no warriors around. Neiko and her mom walked to their car and left. As they were leaving, he ducked behind a tree and waited till they were far down the road. He left his hiding place and cautiously approached the house. He listened. No one was home. He searched for the spare key and found it on top of the porch light. He unlocked the door and quickly sneaked into Neiko’s room and went straight to the closet. As soon as he found the box that contained her toys, he dug wildly for the one he wanted but found nothing. “I found everybody but that one I want. Where does she keep him? I’d better hurry before she gets back! I hope they went to the grocery store,” he said to himself. He began to put the others back. He accidentally bumped the fortress, and it fell onto the floor spilling all of its treasure and the toy he was searching for. “There you are,” he said gratefully. “But now I have to clean up the rest of this mess, whoever you are.” He picked up the rest of the mess and set it just as it was. He took a minute to look at the pictures in the room. On the bulletin board there was a picture of his booty, and at the bottom it said: *Ramses the Dark Pharaoh*. He looked at the toy doubtfully and thought a minute. “So your name is Ramses, huh? Well, that sounds about right. You are my ticket to getting rid of Captain Neiko Kidd for good. Just looking at you is enough to make anyone go mad. We are going to see Raven who may be able to bring you to life. Alright, let’s go.”

Ramses did nothing but stare back with his icy stare. Francesco stuffed him in his bag and left the house to go to Raven’s fortress.

\* \* \*

Francesco arrived at the fortress within thirty minutes. As he approached the door, a guard noticed him coming and asked, “Who goes there?”

“It’s just me—Francesco. I wish to speak with Raven ASAP. I have something important for him.”

“Alright, you may proceed,” he said gruffly.

Francesco entered the door and was greeted by a servant, and Francesco told him exactly what he told the guard. “I will tell him you are here, and I will admit you as soon as I can,” replied the servant. Within a few minutes the servant returned and said, “He will speak with you now, sir.”

*That didn’t take very long*, he thought to himself. He took a deep breath to relieve the lump in his throat and entered the throne room.

“I didn’t expect you back so soon, Francesco. What do you have for me? Is Neiko already getting to you?” He asked jeeringly.

“No, I came because I have the thing we will use to frame Neiko. I hope we can pull it off.”

“Well, let me see it. What do we have anyway?”

“I have a toy.”

“A toy? Is that the best you can come up with? Is it one of Monganata’s grandson’s toys? Now I can tell you did a rush job. Francesco, you’re useless!”

“You won’t say that when you see him; he is magnificent and perfect for the job. It is one of *Neiko*’s toys,” he said proudly.

“Him? So you’re saying it is a man? How did you get him? What is his name? Let me see,” Raven said holding out his hand and curiosity in his voice.

“Okay, meet Ramses the Dark Pharaoh,” he said triumphantly as he pulled him out of his bag.

Raven took him and laid him in his massive hand. He looked him over and said, “He’s perfect and scary enough. I’ve never seen anything like this in my entire life. Where did she find something like this?”

“I have no idea. I found out about him by eavesdropping on conversations. I found out a little about his personality. He doesn’t sound too nice.”

“Are you sure he is an enemy? And what else did you find out about him? Tell me everything you know.”



“Well, judging from his name and title, he sounds like a villain and a special one at that. All I know is he picks on this group called the Attack Pack and is the slayer of a whole lot of people. He is also obsessed in trying to marry this girl named Lydia. He is very sore at this guy named Sandstorm because he married Lydia when she was betrothed to him—and what’s more—Saracens and Pharaohs do not get along. Also he is supposed to be the first-born son of this Pharaoh named Osiris. He has three brothers named Menes, Tut, and Re.”

“Tell me more about these Pharaohs and Saracens. And judging by the title *Dark Pharaoh*, Ramses doesn’t actually seem like his so-called brothers and father.”

“I know. The Saracens are a group of people with traits similar to those of the Seven Tribes in doing good deeds, and there are two types: Qarian and Saudian. Both are descendants of this Saracen named Saladin, who is a predecessor to Sandstorm, the guy I mentioned earlier. The Pharaohs are descendants from a Pharaoh named Rumi, and are the killers of the Saracens. Rumi and his son Xerxes killed Saladin in a battle. Later when Sandstorm was a small boy the Pharaohs and their henchmen, the Skull Bearers, came and

murdered all of the Saracens except Sandstorm. Sandstorm's homeland, Amir, was wiped out. His father, Omar, was crucified; his mother, Persephone, was tortured to death along with all of his siblings. Sandstorm already knew the enemy; he watched the devastation and sought after them immediately. During this time he met Lydia—I forget when, and then there you are.”

“Ramses sounds like a natural terror, doesn't he? And the others sound pretty awful as well. I believe you made a great choice. Where do the others in the Attack Pack come from?”

“I'm not really sure, but Ramses has something to do with it; I'm not sure how. I remember her saying something like the rest were from Etowah, and they were two groups, the Predacons and Maximals—I think the Maximals were animal-like and the Predacons were insect-like; both had some types of hybrid creatures of some sort. They joined Sandstorm to find the killer of their tribes, and these two groups were close friends. So Sandstorm is the leader of the Attack Pack—I think, and they live to fight the Pharaohs and their many allies. That's all I know except that Sandstorm's father was Saudian Saracen and his mother was Qarian.”

“So he is both types in one. I'm wondering how does a Dark Pharaoh differ from a plain one from Qari? Surly there must be something.”

“You're probably right, but I'm not very sure about that. Do you have enough power to bring him to life?”

“Hmmm, I think so, but I've never done this before. I'm not sure how much is necessary, and from what you told me about Ramses, we need to be careful. I would hate for something to go wrong—are you *sure* you've told me everything? I'm not so sure that I have to make him chase Neiko around the room. Instead, I have a better idea. Before I show you, think and tell me anything you may have forgotten.”

Francesco thought and thought. “Oh yeah. The Pharaohs are also equipped with magic. The Saracens too.”

“Well, what about *Dark Pharaoh* magic? Is it more powerful than any other magic, or is it just different?”

“It's just probably different—nothing to worry about.”

“Are you *sure*? You're not holding out are you?”

“No, that's everything I know.”

“I can't believe Neiko could create something like this—he is even meaner than I am. Do you suppose this is his original name and character?”

“No, probably not.”

“Now I want you to hold him, and when I say go, I want you to tap him with

this nail,” said Raven as he handed the nail and Ramses to Francesco.

Raven brought the Eye of Mohica out and the talisman shone with green light. “Go.”

Francesco tapped him.

*Pop!*

“Nothing happened. I guess it didn’t work.”

“I didn’t cast the spell yet. I wanted you to hear the difference.” Raven took the round glowing stone and began to chant into a language he could not understand. The Eye changed from green to red to blue. Francesco shivered at the sight. Magic made him uneasy. “Now tap him,” Raven said in a strange voice. Francesco shuddered and obeyed.

*Clang!*

The sound of metal on metal startled him, and he dropped Ramses. When he hit the floor, the sound of plastic echoed in the hall. Francesco looked at him in a frightened manner. “H-h-how did you d-do th-that?” Francesco stammered. “I mean, for one second he’s plastic, then metal, then plastic again. That scared me to death.”

“You couldn’t possibly understand. It’s too complicated to describe. You were scared? Just think how Neiko will feel when this happens when she plays with him. I can do much more than just making his armor clang.”

Francesco looked at him with eyes as big as saucers. “You can do *more*? What are you trying to do—give her a heart attack? What else can you do?”

Raven chuckled. “Don’t worry. Neiko’s heart is strong. Well, who will believe his armor clanged when he and Sandstorm were fighting? Neiko would tell everyone, and they would be convinced she is crazy. When I’m through, Neiko will be without a reputation. There you have it. You came up with a very good idea, and you picked the arch-villain and someone you wouldn’t want alive. Good work. I will surprise you with what else I can do.”

“Well, thanks, but what if her parents have her put in a loony bin? How will you be able to seize her? I still think it’s a bit much.”

“Oh, don’t wuss out on me now. It would be worse if he chased her around the room. Besides, we would have no problems then. As for threat, Bloodhawk will swipe her before that happens. You, my friend, must act like you don’t know the plan, and help prove her false lunacy. Now, return Ramses to his home as soon as you can, and hang on for the ride. Prepare for the unexpected. I will inform Bloodhawk about the plan, and I will keep you informed. Now go.”

“I won’t suffer from Neiko so badly since I know where the plan will lead to.”

“Well, good. You should be proud. Good luck.”

“You, too. See ya.”

Francesco left feeling good and lightly laden. *I can now rest easier*, he thought.