

# Isabel Adams

## Prologue

I wasn't as fast. Or strong. Or maybe even as brave as they were.....but I could do it. No matter what they all said, I could do it!

## Spirit of the Warrior

Sharp, keen, dark eyes peered into the sunny clearing ahead as two, tanned ears carefully listened for any movement whatsoever in the seemingly peaceful woods. An unknowing rabbit hopped into the clearing not seeing or hearing the clever, silent hunter in the bushes behind it. The hunter smiled and thought, 'This catch will be easy.' while skillfully latching an arrow noiselessly onto the bowstring, waiting until the precise moment when the prey came closer to let the arrow fly and hit its mark with ease. The hunter stepped out with a smile on her face from hitting the rabbit with such expertise and precision, then walked over to where it lay and picked it up, tied it with the other game she had gathered, and ran silently through the dense woods back to her home.

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"Hau Mother!" The hunter cried as she ran to the tepee in her small, quiet, Indian village that lay in a wide valley, on the northern part of the Mississippi River.

"Hau Angeni!" Her mother cried as, she came in the tepee. "Where have you been?"

"Hunting in the forest. Here is my catch."

Angeni, (which means Spirit...) handed her mother the furry bundle of rabbits, a few squirrels and a beaver which were received with a smile.

“My dear, you have improved since your last trip.”

“Thank you Mother,” Angeni smiled. “I hope to one day go with Father or Adoeette on one of their hunts.”

Her mother smiled as she watched her go to make new arrows; she indeed lived up to her name as a spirit.

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That night as the braves came in, I noticed that there were less than the night before and that troubled me; but at least my brother was with them. As he got down off his horse, I walked up to him and greeted him.

“What happened Adoeette? Where are the others?”

He shook his head solemnly, “We were attacked by Cheyenne braves as we returned; they died with honor.”

I felt my heart sink in my chest. There were less and less after every hunting trip. Something had to be done!

“Has anyone told Father yet?” I questioned. Adoeette nodded as we walked to put his horse in the pen with the others. It seemed so wrong. Our tribes once lived in peace and now were at war. It made no sense.

As Adoeette tended to the horses, I wandered up to the sacred resting place of the one my people called the greatest of *ALL* warriors: Enapay. In the language of my people that means: One who appears bravely. He indeed was brave in every battle he was faced with; he charged straight in without fear, almost knowing that he would emerge victorious.

“I should have guessed that you would be here my dear,” a gentle, rough voice stated. I jumped, then smiled, as I saw my grandmother walking up the old, worn path that led to the warriors' resting site.

“How did you guess, Grandmother?”

She smiled cheekily. “Whenever you would wander off when you were young, your parents or I would always find you up here at this very spot. As if you were expecting someone, and from that very first time, I always suspected that you were drawn to this place for a reason.....a special reason.”

I smiled as we walked down the hill, back to the tepee for dinner. I saw that mother had made stew. It was still steaming in the bowl as I ate hungrily, and my grandmother smiled.

“Been out hunting again, Angeni?” my Father asked. I nodded, remaining silent as he and my brother cast glances at each other but said nothing. I knew what they were thinking; that I shouldn’t be out hunting. I may not be a brave, but I can hunt just as well, track just as well, and fish just as well. I am as capable as they are, but my father and brother did not see it this way. I constantly had to prove myself to the men in my tribe as a warrior.

‘But soon,’ I thought, ‘the day will come when I will not have to.’

I didn’t know however, that day was swiftly approaching.

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Two weeks passed with no Cheyenne activity in the surrounding area. We resumed our lives thinking all had been put right between the tribes. One day as I was returning from a successful hunt, I saw several horses riding swiftly towards my village. I raced through the woods down a steep hill, over the rushing river and through the tall grass to get back to the village before they did. I ran to the family tepee to where my father, brother, and grandmother were talking,

“Angeni! What is wrong?!” Adoeette asked with worry evident in his eyes. I tried to tell them, but my breath was too quick.

“Th-there are Cheyenne riders, many of them, maybe ten or so!”

Adoeette readied his tomahawk as we heard the neighing of horses approaching the village. My father hurried my grandmother and I into the tepee. As we sat in anticipation, wondering what would happen, my grandmother used her stick to lift a small flap that even I didn’t know about in the tepee and motioned for me to look with her. I smiled at how clever she was; like a fox, I looked out of the flap to see several Cheyenne braves and....their chief!

I was confused, but he obviously wanted to discuss something or he would’ve not left the safety of his territory. He looked at my father, then looked towards the tepee; my grandmother smirked as she heard their conversation.

“What are they saying grandmother?” I quite impatiently asked, earning a bop on the head with her stick.

“Hush! So I can listen!” She chuckled, making me smile. She continued to listen so I sat down on the mat and began to make a necklace, when one of the Cheyenne braves came in the tepee and laughed.

“Just like a chief’s daughter, to sit and make bead necklaces.”

That angered me! I got up and slapped him in the face. I was not going to be spoken to in such a way! He was shooed away by my mother who having just returned from talking with the village woman heard what happened and smiled at me smugly. She knew what I could do when I was angered. As the brave left, I saw other chiefs ride into the village and they all began to head for the big fire pit.

“A counsel of chiefs,” my grandmother stated gravely. “It has begun.”

I cringed. I didn’t like the sound of that....

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The Counsel talked long into the night. I would hear beating of drums and braves howling from time to time. Although I tried, I just couldn’t sleep. I got up very quietly so as not to wake my mother and grandmother, and snuck out of the tepee. I picked my way through the village being careful to avoid the Counsel. I finally came to the great warriors’ grave. I sighed as I laid my hand on the marker that was there.

“If we ever needed you Enapay, or someone like you, it would be now.” As I whispered, the warm, summer wind softly blew through my hair as if it were answering me. Then as I went to turn and go, I saw a man standing in the midst of the trees. He was tall, looked very strong with straight, black hair and war beads spread throughout! I backed up a bit, intimidated by his sudden presence. He took a step towards me, so I drew a small knife I had hidden in my moccasin. Ready to either run or die. He took yet other step towards me and smiled.

“A small knife is no good against strong man Angeni,” he laughed.

“How do you know me?” I tentatively asked, not liking the fact that a stranger knew my name. How did I know he wasn’t a Cheyenne warrior sent to kill me?

“I have been waiting for this moment since you were a child, Angeni.” He walked closer to me and my nervousness increased, as he got closer.

“Waiting for what?” I shakily asked, now growing more nervous by the second.

“For you to fulfill your destiny. “Do you remember the old legend of Enapay? As the warrior was dying, he was promised that one day, another would take up his mantle in battle and protect this village against those who would seek its destruction.”

“Yes, I remember the tale.....but you are not saying that is me!....Are you?”

The man nodded, “You were chosen when you first came here to be the next great protector.”

“But how? I am not the most skilled, or the strongest, or even the bravest of my tribe! Why would Enapay choose me and not one of the other braves?”

“Because out of all of them, you have the most heart, and the same spirit that he did,” the man encouraged.

“But what if I fail? What if I can’t protect my village?”

The man smiled, “You must never be afraid to fail, because if you fail, that means you tried.”

The man gently touched my head and I felt a surge go through me! As if something had just entered into my body, giving me a great energy! I looked up at the man, but he was gone! No one was there! I looked around some and felt the wind softly blow through my long hair again. I looked back to Enapay’s grave and then into the woods to see the man fading away.

In an instant, the wind became a great gust! The trees groaned in the strength of the sudden force of the wind, my hair wrapped around my face, whipping my shoulders. I covered my ears to try and dim the howling. In all my days I’d never known a wind so monstrous, and then it was gone, just like that. Darkness filled my eyes and a calm dead silence was...

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I woke up to worried voices and a sore body; I opened my eyes to see my father, brother, and grandmother. I groaned as I sat up, my body for some reason not wanting to obey.

“Angeni....are you alright?” my father asked with a slight hint of panic in his voice.

“I am fine Father....why do you ask?”

“When your grandmother awoke, you were not in the tepee so we feared something may have happened to you. We all looked until Adoeette suggested we search up here, and then we found you sleeping by Enapay’s grave.”

I was puzzled momentarily, until I remembered the events from last night. I looked around for the man I spoke to, but saw no one, just the trees and the rustling leaves.

“Let me help you,” my brother offered. He helped me to stand up and put one of my arms around his shoulders. I gratefully accepted his help as we walked down the steep hill, but once we got down to flatter ground, I insisted I walk on my own. I felt if I was to be the next great warrior, I would not depend on others too much to assist me. I had to be strong on my own while being strong along with my village. I went into the tepee to get some rest and found my grandmother sitting there.

“Hua grandmother,” I greeted respectfully. She nodded and I could sense her piercing gaze boring straight into my soul.

“I always knew he would choose you Angeni.”

“Grandmother?” I questioned, acting as if I didn’t know what she was referring to.

She chuckled, “My dear, just because I am old, does not mean I do not see. I know what has happened....and who you saw; Enapay has chosen you, my child, to take up his place as the village warrior! It was he you spoke to last night, and has deemed you worthy to possess a portion of his spirit to give you strength; it is a great honor to have bestowed on one’s self. Many have deemed themselves worthy and failed.”

“But what made Enapay choose me? I am considered the least of the warriors.”

“Because of your heart my dear Angeni; he sees spirit in you!”

I nodded and went to my place to lie down, a thousand thoughts running through my mind at once. But I drifted off to sleep before anymore could flood my head.

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Weeks later...

I was hunting out in the tall grasses to the south of my village in a wide meadow with a great deer in my sights. I crouched low and notched an arrow effortlessly making sure that my prey did not see or hear me.

I carefully stepped closer, turning my feet sideways every time I stepped, and brushing the dryer grass aside with the side of my foot so as to walk silently, I came

closer and just as the deer looked up....I let my arrow fly, piercing his head! I nearly jumped for joy at my catch! Surely now my brother would consider taking me with him on his hunts.

I whistled for my horse, Shadow, who galloped over and allowed me to put the deer on her backside and we gently began riding back to the village. As we rode back, from time to time, I would see what appeared to be smoke, but knew that it wasn't from my village. There had been no activity from the Cheyenne since the Counsel met in our village. And from what I had heard, we were at peace. But as we got closer to the village, the smoke grew. I began to worry, hoping that nothing had gone wrong while I was hunting; however it became abundantly clear as I approached the village that I was wrong. We came to a tall hill near my home and looked below to see the valley on fire!!!

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“Aii!” I gasped in alarm as the smoke rose from the valley floor and penetrated the clouds above due to the burning trees and grass beneath me in the valley. I left the deer hidden in a safe spot hoping it would not be burnt, and charged towards my burning home, praying that my family was safe and not dead.

We rode into the flames and I saw my village in utter chaos! It must've been a surprise attack! I rode to the first tepee where I knew the family had many children. I slid off Shadow and had them ride out of the village to higher ground away from the blaze, then began calling out to the other villagers:

“Follow me! Do not go to retrieve anything that you do not need! Follow me to safety!”

I managed to have the front half of the village listen. I had one of the braves lead them on up towards the mountains in the distance so they would at least be away from the fire; then I ran to the center of the village to see the rest of our braves battling Cheyenne warriors in the fire! I spotted Adoette fighting the brave who had insulted me, and one of them was heading towards my family's tepee! Not knowing if my grandmother was safe, I swiftly ran ahead of him and stepped in front of the tepees' entrance.

“You will go no further!” I ordered. An angry look came across the brave's face and he threw me out of the way! I was shocked; he could be executed for that! I got up and kicked him hard in the side to get him away from the entrance, but this time he threw me down on the ground and with a murderous glare in his eyes, raised his

tomahawk to me! My mind began to race as the deadly weapon slowly came down towards my head. I screamed!

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The blade never touched me....I looked up to see that I had picked up a small, but thick wooden post and placed it in front of my face. The Cheyenne brave tugged on his axe, but to no avail. I smirked and used his distraction to push the post upward and into his face! As he howled in pain, I swung the post to the side hitting him square in the cheek and jaw; his head whipped to one side whilst I did it to the other side as well. With blood streaming from his nose, and both sides of his face he pulled out a small knife and threw it. I dodged it and managed to get the axe free in the process. Once it was free, I turned to see him running full speed at me. At the last second, I drew back and swung the axe into his stomach. I did not need to see what I had done because I knew what happened when a tomahawk collided with an object. I went into the tepee to see my mother and grandmother huddled in a corner, whose faces lit up with joy to see me!

“Angeni!!” my mother cried, getting up and hugging me tightly. “Are you well? Are you injured?”

“No, Mother. I am fine. Come; let us go!”

As they picked up a few bundles of things they had gathered, I retrieved a bow, arrows, and a quiver with extra arrows.... just in case. I helped them out of the tepee just as the fire reached it and began to devour it in its flames.

We ran through the village as fast as we could with all the smoke, fire, and fighting. We made it to the center of the village when unbeknownst to me, a Cheyenne brave was waiting with an arrow poised ready to strike! I heard movement, but failed to see the arrow in time, but it wouldn't hit me....my grandmother had seen the brave at the last second and pushed me out of the way so I avoided being hit. But the arrow struck her right below the heart!

“Grandmother!!” I cried. The Cheyenne brave then strung an arrow, but mine hit him first. He gasped as blood began to flow freely from his wound, then he collapsed. My mother and I barely made it out of the village carrying my grandmother. Mother was already in tears, and tears were beginning to cloud my vision as well, but my grandmother looked....happy for some reason.

“My little warrior,” she whispered. “Do not weep for me, you must go and face the Cheyenne in battle.”

“But how grandmother? I could not even protect you!”

“You have the spirit of the great Enapay.....you will not fail my child. I go to be with your grandfather, with our ancestors....do not weep for me.”

Her eyes began to darken and she did not speak. She simply wiped away my tears and the tears of my mother, as her eyes closed and she smiled widely.....then her chest fell for the last time.

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I didn't speak. I didn't know what to think. It seemed my mind, along with my body, had gone numb all at once. I looked down to my hand in my grandmother's and expected at any moment for her to open her eyes and greet us. But the more I sat there, the more I realized that she wouldn't. Father and Adoette soon joined us after fighting off the Cheyenne braves. But once they saw us and grandmother's body...all luster of victory was lost as they too joined the tribe in mourning. Adoette came beside me and gently wrapped his arms around me to comfort me.

I let tears fall freely down my face as I thought about how I had failed to protect my village. And my grandmother....why did Enapay choose me? I wasn't a warrior! Just a girl with a dream of being one. I unwrapped myself from my brothers arms and swiftly ran to Enapays' grave. The fire had thankfully not been blown up here, the resting place was untouched. I fell down next to the marker and wept.

“Why? Why did you choose me? I failed....I couldn't even protect my grandmother... why?”

As I cried, I felt a soft breeze in my hair and felt a strong hand on my shoulder. I looked up to see Enapay with a crestfallen look on his face; he knelt down beside me and lifted my chin so I was looking him in the face.

“Please....choose someone else, I cannot do this.”

“That my child, is where you are wrong. You did not fail. Your grandmother's time had come.”

“But I should've been there before the Cheyenne attacked....I'm not the warrior think I am.”

Enapay remained silent as I cried, then spoke. “Then who are you?”

I remained silent...pondering his words when he spoke again.

“I chose you because you’re NOT a warrior. You have the spirit of one! Just because the braves go into battle, does not mean they are warriors; it is about the spirit inside that judges whether or not one is a warrior.”

I sobbed quietly for a while by Enapays grave, while he looked over the now burnt village with a determined look in his eyes that kindled a small spark of hope in my heart.

“Your conflict with the Cheyenne is not yet over....they will return to extinguish this village and you *MUST* be ready Angeni.”

“How do I know that I won’t fail again? What if I’m not strong enough to defeat them?”

“You will defeat them; you have the spirit of a warrior inside of you! And warriors never give up! No matter how strong the others may look, they will *NOT* prevail.”

Enapay faded into the trees once more and with a mighty burst of wind, he was gone.

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That night, our village buried my grandmother beside Enapay’s grave where we could be certain that nothing would disturb her resting place, and afterwards, my father spoke.

“Though we will grieve the loss of Unci, her memory will live on in the lives of those who she knew and loved the most. But we cannot grieve long, for the Cheyenne will soon return seeking to destroy us, we must fight!”

Our braves howled as the women and children glanced at each other in concern. They had never been without some form of shelter in a war before and were in no way ready to help aid the wounded because all of our medicine was lost in the fire. I looked around and saw the fear evident in each face, unsure myself of how things would turn out. But I had to remember not to lose heart! We would overcome the Cheyenne one way or another!

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A plan started to form in my mind the next morning as we came upon a tall hill that overlooked the meadow I loved to hunt in. As I saw the forms of Cheyenne braves and my father along with our village’s braves, walking towards each other with the

intention of war, my heart fell. The women and children were following my mother and I. As we led them to safety, I remembered what Enapay had said.

“Warriors never quit! You will prevail!”

I smiled as my plan began to form. I called for the villagers to stop and my mother looked at me quite puzzled.

“Everyone listen to me! See how our men fight while we retreat? I say we stay and help them fight!”

“How Angeni?” my mother questioned. “We have no means of assisting them.”

“We do mother! The maple saplings are just ahead! Have the strong young men gather boulders and the older women take the tall, dry grass and weave it around the boulders. We’ll have the young men pull back the saplings and put the boulders on the crowns. While the women and older men are preparing that, let’s have two young men make a small fire and tend to it, making sure the smoke does not attract attention. Once the boulders are in place, have them light the grass surrounding it on fire and launch them into the field!”

The villagers quickly got to work! I showed the men the right trees to put the boulders on so they were angled into the field, and then the women wove thick layers of grass onto the boulders to ensure the fire reached the meadow. As I watched them work, I also looked into the field to see how things progressed. Now the two tribes were getting closer to each other, and some of the braves from each side were scattering to hide or lay in wait. As I was pondering whether or not to ride out there and help, I heard:

“Go to the gravesite.”

I looked around but saw no one. Then I smiled and ran back to my village and ran up to the Enapay’s grave to see a bow, arrows and a quiver filled with more arrows.

“The time is here, Angeni.” Enapay stated, appearing by the bow. “Go! Be brave, have heart, and prevail!”

I nodded and took the bow and arrows. I walked down the hill feeling nervous, and a bit scared....but a voice called out:

“Fear can be used to push you to have courage, or it can destroy it.....have courage Angeni!”

I smiled as I let Enapay's words settle into my heart and mind. I wasn't as fast, or strong, or maybe even as brave as they were.....but I could do it, no matter how I felt or what they said, I could do it!!

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I made it back to the hill where the villagers were letting the saplings go, launching the flaming boulders flying towards the unsuspecting Cheyenne braves and landing with a force that shook the ground!

“Now everyone, get to safety!!” At least if they could see through the smoke, they wouldn't see my village. I whistled for Shadow and swung up on his back, taking a deep breath, and charged towards the battle!

Everything seemed to slow as I approached the entrance to the field, with Enapay's bow strung; I took aim at one of the Cheyenne braves and let the arrow fly hitting him straight in the chest! My brother looked around for where the arrow came from, clearly not being able to see me through the smoke, which was fine by me. I rode up a bit further into the woods, taking cover behind the trees, trying to keep Shadow from spooking and shot a few more braves down. Now others were starting to look around to see where the arrows were coming from.

My father looked around for a brief minute before they all engaged each other once more, but my brother was determined to find out where the arrows were coming from. However he did not look around for the braves that were lying in wait. I saw one move towards him with his tomahawk poised, ready for the kill, so I kicked Shadow into a fast gallop and sped towards my brother calling for him to run.

He saw me coming, but was confused as to why I was yelling so urgently. The brave was beginning to draw his arm back, so I readied my knife and as we swooped by. I lowered myself a bit and sliced the brave's throwing arm while leaping off Shadow, tackling my brother to the ground. A Cheyenne fired an arrow in his direction which hissed over our heads, hitting the already injured brave. Adoette looked at me surprised and a bit confused.

“Angeni...what are you..? Why are you here?”

“I am assisting in the battle, is that not clear?” I smirked, then rolled out of the way as an arrow flew into the ground beside where my leg had been. I quickly loaded my bow and shot. Then as more braves rushed towards us, I felt an energy and strength that I could only assume was Enapay's spirit urging me on.

As one brave came at me, I grabbed his weapon and used it to slice his back. Then spinning around, kicked one into my brother's tomahawk. I dodged another's deadly swing, and swung upwards with my knife, catching his torso with the blade. After my brother had finished off some others, we raced towards where my father was struggling against a seemingly much stronger brave.

A quick scan of his war paint revealed to me that he was the Cheyenne chief's son, so I decided that I would not kill him, but rather injure him. As we got closer, I dove for his legs and tackled him to the ground and then stood in front of my father. As he rose, shaking his head to clear it, he looked down at me in a surprise almost equal to my father's asking the question with his eyes: What was I doing in the battle? I stood my ground with a fierce look in my dark eyes, not allowing the murmurs of the other braves to affect me.

"This is no place for a girl such as you." He spat. I raised my hand and slapped him hard across the face.

"Silence!" I shouted. "Look around you....this is no place for any of us, yet here we stand. Whether it be because of territory or hunting grounds or some other issue, killing each other off! Where have our senses gone that we have stooped to such behavior? You are the son of a chief! I beg you to see that there is no reason in any of this. Our people can live in harmony with one another, or we will exterminate each other. Which will you have?"

Everyone looked at me with now an admiration instead of surprise, but some of the Cheyenne were amazed that I spoke with wisdom that was not entirely mine. I however knew why it was so. Enapay.

"You speak wisely, little one," the chief's son stated. "But how do you propose we live in this peace you speak of?"

"I propose that our tribes share our resources: the water that runs through the rivers and the hunting grounds that our people possess. We share what we have here, and your people are skilled in the art of making arrow heads and weapons. So each of us has something to share and we live in peace, what say you all?"

There were grunts of approval and some of discontent, wanting to continue the fight. The chief's son thought for a moment then smiled.

"I shall rehearse your proposal in the ears of my tribe's counsel," he stated. I smiled, but it was brief; while we were discussing the issue, one of the Cheyenne braves became angry and lunged towards the chief's son! My eyes widened and I reacted by

tackling him to the ground. Before the brave landed and gave a rage filled yell, he charged at me swiftly and I barely had time to react.

As he got closer, I picked up a large branch and blocked his strikes with him only cutting my arm once. He, momentarily distracted by the chief's son, gave me an advantage to get down. I spun on my hands, tripping him using my legs; then I jumped up kicking him in the torso and punching his face as he slowly fell. He landed with a thud and I grabbed his weapon. The thought entered into my mind of finishing him, but Enapay would not do that; he would simply defeat him, not taking his life if he could help it. I walked away from the brave and handed the axe to the chief's son. He smiled and handed it back to me.

“For your courage and valor little one, you have the spirit of the warrior inside of you.”

I bowed my head respectfully, taking the axe before they gathered their remaining braves - including the unconscious one - and turned back towards their village in the east. My brother and father came over smiling widely; my father put his hand on my shoulder and said:

“Today, you have made your grandmother, Enapay, and your ancestors very proud! My little warrior!”

I smiled as my brother hugged me tightly and chuckling he said, “I think you are able to join us on our hunts now, Angeni.”

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The peace Angeni brought to her village was long lasting and prosperous; she had saved her village! And proved to everyone around her, that no matter what your station in life, what others may say, or if you think you're not brave and are afraid to fail, that you can find courage, take heart and prevail against your fears! And who knows? If you ever go to the northern region of Mississippi, you may just hear the hooves of a horse and the laughter of Angeni the Warrior!

The End

