

# *Sing to Me of Dreams*

KATHRYN LYNN DAVIS



POCKET BOOKS

New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

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## DEDICATION

Always—

To my husband Michael,  
who recognized and understood  
the creative madness,  
and helped me to accept and survive it.

And to Jillian Gardner,  
who turned anger into inspiration,  
friendship into trust,  
and, most important, wished me  
success *and* peace of mind.

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*Semper F.I.*

# Prologue



*Vancouver Island, British Columbia*

1861

The child was born on a night of moon and thunder and a wind that sang high, sweet and clear, naming this a night of miracles. The clouds rumbled with rain that never fell and the grasses whispered the secrets of the night, the sighing, singing secrets of the darkness and the stars.

Koleili lay propped on her elbows, waiting, her hair a blue-black fall of water on the cattail mat. She was young and fragile, though oddly unafraid as she felt the uncanny stillness that had settled where the Many Waters flowed—the hush of the spirits' breath withheld, as if they too were waiting. The fear, which had shadowed and made dim the sun since she learned of the child growing within her, had left when the first pain ripped through her dark-skinned body. Now nothing moved but the distant wind and the baby, flailing in darkness, fighting its way toward the soft, beguiling light.

The People crouched outside the hut of woven mats, silent, expectant, for they felt the chill of magic in the air. They tapped their drums gently, rhythmically, reverently. Hawilquolas, who held sacred the creatures of the earth, he who would call himself father of the child, prayed to the sunrise, the beginning of all beauty, light and life. He prayed that Koleili would prosper and the child be strong and safe.

Koleili turned in the golden light, hands on her swollen belly, weary

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from the ebb and flow of pain, thinking of the Stranger who had given her this child. An impalpable presence drifted about her shoulders, flickered in the light of a single torch, shone in the eyes of the midwives, chief among whom was Kwiaha, who had the gift of *siwan*—the little magic. She it was who muttered words of power, who blew eagle-down from her callused palm, who painted with red ocher in the sand. She it was who stroked Koleili's belly and sang softly, crooning,

Come easy to this world,  
little spirit.  
Come from the secret waters of your exile  
to the Many Flowing Waters of the Earth,  
which welcome you and bless you.  
Come to me,  
Come easy,  
Come.

Kwiaha's daughter knelt beside her, rubbing Koleili's body with oil, gripping her hand when the pain was blinding. She crouched, poised and ready when the child began to come. Outside, among the tall and fragrant trees, the air stirred with a promise while a shadow fell upon the moon and the Thunder raged.

The girl-child came so quickly that the women were without speech. Before they splashed her with sacred water to wake her sleeping, unborn soul, she opened her mouth and smoke came from between her lips to fill the hut with a soft blue light.

Sweat-soaked and astonished, Koleili froze while Kwiaha and her daughter knelt, for they heard the sighing of the earth and the singing of waters which before had been stilled and silent. The midwives saw the child, who should have been frail and unable to hold herself upright, turn on her stomach, lift her head, and look at them with eyes the color of an Island lake—clear, ageless and wise.

Around the hut the sacred wolves—spirits of revered ancestors—made a circle, an impenetrable circle through which none could come or go. The sleek silver wolves claimed the girl-child theirs with a howl that split the Thunder and swept the shadow from the moon.

The white-breasted owls on the roof hooted; Koleili heard the mournful cry and whispered, "My child will be a Dreamer." Raven circled, dipped low over the hut, and Hawilquolas said, "The child will be a Dancer." Thunderbird moved through the heavens, roaring his power, and Kwiaha murmured, "The child will be a Healer."

The clouds sank low and the mist rose to meet them while the child



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opened her mouth and the three women gasped, enchanted, transfixed. The baby's voice, which should have been harsh and full of fury at her birth, flowed like water, like the silvery music of the birds.

Outside the People murmured songs of gratitude and worship. The earth had spoken in a rush of gilded waters, the sky in the clouds of thunder rimmed with moonlight, and the animals, each in his own voice and time. Thus was she born and blessed, the Child, the Prophet, who would bring the People to thrive among the Many Flowing Waters on the Island of the Raven in the light of the misted sun.

So it was promised, so it had come to be.



PART I

TANU



Vancouver Island, British Columbia



# Chapter

## 1

1876

She whom the People called Tanu, in awe and gratitude and not a little fear, lay awake, dreaming. In her dream, she saw the soot-blackened walls of the Longhouse, the sturdy cedar planks—unbent by rain or wind or cold sea air—that kept out the dark, cloudy night. In her hazy, half-dreamed dream, she smelled the damp mustiness of the house that rose above her into darkness, had risen so for many suns and many generations.

Four days ago Tanu had left the small, scattered huts of the summer village, where the People had been working since spring to catch and prepare salmon and game, berries, roots and leaves. These they had smoked and dried so there would be food when winter came. The summer storage containers had been filled to overflowing, so Tanu had offered to bring the food to the People's winter home, to store it safely in the low dug-out room of the Longhouse until it was needed.

Now she lay isolated by a curtain of smoke so fine it was invisible, except when a breeze rippled past, and the lines of the Longhouse wavered and grew dim. The looms and their carved spindle whorls stood empty, abandoned until winter captured the People within these moss-chinked cedar walls. The ridgeposts, with their carved likenesses of cougar, bear and deer, stood tall and strong, and cast shadows that breathed life into the

fine old cedar, so that Tanu felt the power of their guardian spirits all around her.

She brushed the long black hair away from her face, yet still she felt on her cheeks the breath of her People, the memory of their voices, tinged with unusual excitement. There were many unspoken things that eddied in the air of the summer camp—plans and expectations which they did not share with Tanu. She was bewildered by their silence, unused to feeling such confusion. She had come here to be alone, to know again the aged Longhouse, because she felt unsettled, certain that change was coming to the Salish village. She was full of trepidation, yet oddly excited. She had had to get away, to be alone to think and dream in private. The People had let her go without protest. She was Tanu and none would have dared to stop her.

She lay alone on the wooden sleeping platform that circled the huge room, and into her dream came Colchoté, the companion of her childhood, his gaze unreadable.

That was strange; always she had read so easily the thoughts of others. And this was Colchoté—her friend, her brother. His father, Hawilquolas, had treated Tanu like a daughter, had, indeed, given her her first name. Colchoté's grandfather, Tseikami, had become her teacher, since her mother's parents were long dead. They had become her family—Hawilquolas, Tseikami, her mother Koleili, and Colchoté. She knew him well—his hawk nose, square face and wide, round eyes and open expression, as if he had no secrets he would not share.

She turned restlessly, crossed her arms over her chest, remembering with poignant clarity a day five summers earlier. She had just seen the passing of ten winters and was supposed to have been sorting herbs and roots—drying, boiling, putting them in pouches for the shaman's medicine bag. But the azure sky had called her, and the pounding sea on the sand. She had been unable to resist. She had crept away to an abandoned bay covered with patterned driftwood, sheltered by high rocks on either side.

She had barely arrived when she felt someone watching. She looked up, startled, at Colchoté, who was contemplating her intently. "I thought you would be here," he murmured. "It is where you find escape when you wish to be alone."

"If you know that, then why have you come?" Tanu challenged.

"Because I too wanted to be alone." He spoke as if there were no contradiction in that statement.

Perhaps, after all, there was not, she mused. She was surprised to find she did not mind his presence. She had grown with him from childhood as brother and sister grow—side by side and step by step. She was

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comfortable with him, at ease. "I come because of the driftwood. I like to draw the patterns in the sand."

He nodded. "Show me."

Tanu and Colchoté spent much of the day examining wood, tracing drawings in the sand, trying to make powder of the darker wood to give their pictures color and tone.

Tanu touched the patterns reverently, smiling. "I think the rituals of the People, made visible, would look like this. Here"—she swept her arm in a broad gesture to indicate the crescent beach—"in the wood, the colors, the textures, is magic which fades and shifts and darkens, but does not really change. It comforts me because it is dependable."

Colchoté, who had seen only thirteen summers, was mesmerized by the melody of Tanu's voice, the sweetness of her smile. Yet in the back of his mind he heard the insistent, incessant rush of the sea. "Dependable like the tides?" he asked, turning outward, toward the wind-whipped ocean.

Tanu's green eyes widened as she followed his astonished gaze. Like Colchoté, she had become absorbed in the details of the tiny beach. Like him, she had forgotten the sun that moved across the sky, drawing in its golden wake the changing tides. Now the waves crashed upon the beaten sand, swirling about their ankles in white sprays of foam.

They realized at the same moment that the entrance to the beach was blocked by the sea, given power and fury by a mighty wind. They were trapped inside the moon-shaped curve of rock with the water creeping closer as the tide moved inexorably toward them.

They stared at each other, flushed with embarrassment and shame. They had been irresponsible, foolish to forget something so elemental, one of the most constant of the cycles of Nature which shaped their lives. Tanu, blessed by the spirits, she who knew so well Nature's moods and powers, had failed to remember the first lesson she had learned on the Island of her birth.

"We must return over the rocks," she said sheepishly, peering at the rugged barrier they must climb hand over hand. "And soon, before the waves surround us."

"This way!" Colchoté shouted with sudden exuberance. "Come!" He grasped her hand and they fled to the base of the rocks.

They began to climb the jagged boulders—battered by a rising wind that tugged and pushed and threw them off their course, drenched by the turbulent sea that erupted furiously, leaving the rocks slippery and difficult to cling to. The wind snarled, whipping their hair into their mouths, carrying their shouts of reassurance into the furious slate-gray sea.

They did not speak as they sought handholds and indentations for their

feet, but were aware every moment of each other's presence. Colchoté sensed when Tanu lost her grip, and he grasped her ankles firmly until she regained her balance. Once, she felt a breath of chilly air and reached down just in time to take his hand and hold him steady while he climbed up beside her. The wind was bitter, the waves slashing and full of power, but the two struggled together against the raging tide, without hesitation, without fear.

When they reached the crest of the rock barrier, they stopped to glance back. The waves crashed violently against the jagged rocks, and the sea spewed upward, reaching for its victims. But they had moved beyond its power; it sprayed scattered foam ineffectually at their feet. At the same instant, they looked at each other and smiled, exhilarated by the danger they had escaped, the madness of the wind-tossed sea they had defeated. "Do not ever forget this moment or this victory," Colchoté shouted above the wind.

"I will not forget," Tanu cried, elated. She knew, even then, that had she been alone, the sense of wonder would have been pale and soon forgotten. The victory was so sweet, so full of power, because they had won it together.

As they began to descend, Colchoté lost his footing and slid down and down, clawing at the pitted rock as he fell. Tanu found him on a jutting shelf, bruised and cut, examining his foot. It was torn deep near the ankle, bleeding freely. She took her things from the pouch at her side, cleaned, medicated and sewed shut the wound, bandaging it in soft pounded cedarbark.

Now they had to reach the sand. They wrapped their arms about each other's waists with Colchoté's bad foot between them. Using their three good legs, they climbed awkwardly down the twisted rock path. Colchoté's body was pressed to Tanu's side and she felt unaccountably safe, dry and warm despite the precarious angle of the rocks and the cold, wet wind on her skin.

Slowly, limping together, they made their way back to the village where the People, having discovered their loss, waited anxiously. Tanu and Colchoté arrived bruised, cut and dirty, their clothing torn, their hair in hopeless tangles.

Colchoté calmly faced his grandfather, his father and Tanu's mother. All were scowling, yet he leaned casually on an alder stick and told them, "I was on the curved beach looking for driftwood when I tripped and hurt my foot. I could not walk far among the piles of rotting wood. Tanu sensed my danger, heard me call. When she saw the tide was coming in, she came over the rocks and bound my foot, then helped me climb back in spite of the vicious wind and the incoming sea. I am grateful to her."



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Tanu stared at him, stunned. She saw at once that the others believed him. She met Colchoté's eyes, full of secret laughter which scoffed at the damage to his pride because she, a girl of ten summers, had saved him. Everyone knew she was skilled in healing, after all. His sparkling eyes told her it had been worth the price. He would defend her, even with a lie, to protect the day they had shared. She had always cared for him, but in that instant she was overwhelmed by an affection deeper than she had ever known.

But that had been five summers past. The last time she had seen him, Colchoté's eyes had been clouded, impenetrable. He had raised a hand to stop Tanu from asking what troubled him. Now, alone in the Longhouse, a feeling of loss overcame her. Where had her old friend gone that she could not follow?

In her waking dream, she stared into the dying summer fire and could not look away. The smoke drifted toward an opening in the ceiling, laced with sparks like brief stars carried on an imperceptible breath of air. The wood splintered, sparks flew, and a single flame shot upward, flickering—brilliant yellow against dim gray. It hovered in the moist summer air, then glimmered beyond the cedar walls to the forest that rose green and splendid into the sky.

Lying still, unmoving, Tanu followed the wavering light through trees and bracken and sweet-scented pine to a clearing where the reeds grew tall at the edge of a pond. The flame paused among the cattails, where it fluttered, revealing a battered upright stone. Below the timeworn stone the yellow fire became a glowing burst of light that caught the motion of water through reeds and reflected it back—bright green and golden in Tanu's eyes.

Slowly, as slowly as the flames had risen from the hot red stones, the glow faded and the scent of trees became a memory and the walls grew once more tall and strong.

Tanu shifted, freed from the power of the light. Her heartbeat raced; it never ceased to do so when she had the visions which, to her, had become promises of things to come. She thought of gray-haired Tseikami, Head Winter Dancer and shaman of the small Salish village that was Tanu's home. He had taught her to seek the symbols in her visions, to find the gift or warning they foretold, but she could not understand the yellow flame, the stone, the incandescent light upon the water.