

**Chapter Descriptions**  
**DREAMS SHOULD NOT BE BROKEN**  
**Judith Morton Fraser**

**Chapter One: FIONA'S BIRTHDAY**

**Fiona Lonestar MacLean**, hurries to get dressed to celebrate her twelfth birthday, while Mom, **Merle**, and brothers **Sean**, age 14, and **Brucie**, age 9, make preparations in the kitchen, for her party.

As a birthday present to herself, Fiona sneaks into her parents room and searches in Father's "special" drawer to get a glimpse of secret items big brother Sean has hinted were there.

Fearful of being discovered, she quickly rummages through a packet of old letters from someone named **Dancing Feet**, opens a sketch book with a mysterious drawing of a fox, and discovers a photograph of a woman with dark skin and braids.

Momma yells for her. Afraid **Father, Frank**, might be home any second, Fiona quickly puts everything back and hurries into the kitchen.

Everyone is at the table waiting. But there's still no sign of Father. Momma asks Sean to open a beer to start the celebration. Drinking alcohol is nothing new to this family. Although it's Fiona's first taste of beer, Sean doesn't hesitate to chug the whole bottle.

Still no Father. Merle figures he must be at the corner bar, his home away from home. She asks Sean to fetch him. Fiona begs to go too. Recognizing an opportunity to embarrass Father, Momma agrees only if Fiona will take Brucie.

**Chapter Two: MORRIE'S BAR**

At the bar, there is a full out *Ceilidh* (Scottish entertaining party) complete with fiddling music. Sean's told them about Father dancing at the bar, but it's the first time she and Brucie have actually seen him dance. As she watches, Fiona imagines that she'll dance like he does one day. Father is surprised the kids are there, but isn't embarrassed or angry; being drunk has put him in a playful mood.

When the children finally get Father to return home, all of his clothes, and the decorations for Fiona's birthday party are askew on the front lawn. Momma, feeling betrayed and abandoned, begins a tirade of accusations. Sean and Brucie steal into the house while Fiona freezes on the sidewalk. As the fighting escalates, she realizes her birthday party is off. She runs away and heads for the woods, the fastest way to **Gramma's** house. Gramma will know how to make her feel loved and special.

But, the forest is a scary place at night.

**Chapter Three: RUNNING TO GRAMMA'S**

Fiona is in trouble. Once inside the dark woods she is attacked by brambles, bushes, and fears of being punished for everything she's ever done wrong. Heart pounding, she finds her way to the clubhouse she and her brothers built. While resting on a tree swing she hears a voice, carried on the wind, call her name. Tired and scared, she hopes it's her parents looking for her. She waits, breathlessly, but no one comes. Fiona goes deeper into the woods. Her fears continue to mount as a screech owl swoops down on an innocent rabbit nearby. Her adventurous spirit crumbles. Lost, alone and desperate she calls out to God, Jesus, The Great Spirit, and **Kokumthema** (the Great Spirit's helper) for help.

**Johnny White Feather**, who lives on the edge of the woods, races towards her frightened voice. Once there, he sees that being lost has made her afraid of everything, including him. After they make friends, he takes her hand and leads her in the right direction.

Johnny and Fiona make their way safely to Gramma's. Once there, Fiona flies into the wise elder's arms and spurts out all the dangers and fears she's gone through. Gramma is alarmed that her young granddaughter came through the woods, alone, at night. She soothes Fiona's bites and scratches with oils, makes up a bed on the sofa and covers her with a quilt made out of her ancestors old clothes. "Lives from the past are always part of our present," Gramma says. "Old clothes are one of the ways to carry their spirit forward and remind us that they live in our veins."

Fiona wonders who these spirits of the past were and if she'll ever meet any of them face to face.

**Chapter Four: GRAMMA'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT**

Before dawn, Gramma takes Fiona to the "Sacred Circle of Stones" to wait for the sunrise. Gramma's birthday present comes in the way of a prayer. She asks the Great Spirit to guide and protect Fiona, and to lend her strength that she might rise above any of life's difficulties strong and keen like the Golden Eagle.

When the colors brighten the sky, Gramma tells Fiona that she too radiates colors and one day she will see them.

Back at the house, Gramma makes breakfast. Afterwards, they head out for Aunt Dawn's to make the phone call to Fiona's parents so they won't worry about her. Fiona dreads the call.

**Chapter Five: AUNT DAWN'S GIFT**

Fiona, overtired, faints outside the gate at Aunt Dawn's house. It is a foreshadowing of an illness ahead. **Cousin Zane**, age 14, helps Gramma take her up the stairs and onto the front porch. Gramma goes into the house to call Fiona's parents.

**Aunt Dawn** gives Fiona a Talisman Stone reading for her birthday. The stones tell the future. One that assures Fiona that she will dance, travel, and see the world. Fiona is delighted. She wants to dance as gracefully as Father.

**Cousin Violet**, age 13, is jealous that Fiona got a special reading and is perpetually angry. She taunts Fiona, then fakes that she's been hurt. "Lonestar tried to kill me," Violet screams.

Father, arrives and races up the front stairs. "Call her Fiona," he demands. He then aligns with Violet and blames his daughter. Gramma tries to intervene, "You can't take away a part of Lonestar's bloodline. It's mixed and each part adds a richness to who she is. It's a part of who you are too, even though you want to forget it!"

Father doesn't listen. Eyeing the remnants of the Talisman Stone Ceremony, his fear of anything Native American comes to the forefront. He yells at all of them for giving Fiona crazy ideas, drags her to the car and heads for home. Fiona is afraid that she'll never be able to see Gramma again.

#### Chapter Six: **BAS NO BEATHA**

The neighborhood baseball game comes to a halt as Father and Fiona arrive home. Father waves to the neighbors, pretending that all is well. "No need for others to know anymore that they already do about the MacLean Clan," Father says.

Fiona is distraught as she sees the dark patches of black-and-blue that dot Momma's wrists like tattooed fingerprints. They are signs of the continued fight Fiona ran away from. "Nothin's ever so bad as losing you," Momma says as she tries to dismiss the fighting and ease Fiona's worry.

"*Bas no Beatha*, death or life," Father says. It is the Scots' war cry of group strength. "When one does something wrong, all must be punished." Fiona bends over to accept the strapping. She fastens her eyes on the roses in the carpet and repeats the prayer that Gramma said at the Sacred Circle. The prayer eases the pain.

Momma watches helplessly as the kids are lined up, spanked with a belt, and given chores. She rebels against Father's harshness by withdrawing into silence the rest of the week.

#### Chapter Seven: **FREED FROM DUTY**

Father wears his "lucky" red-white-blue plaid shirt and brings Momma flowers. They are signs of peace. The children are excused from duty. Fiona is ordered to never scare Father by running away again. Fiona doesn't want to scare anybody or cause trouble, but she knows that no one, no how, was every going to keep her away from her Gramma or from following her dreams.

Once free, Fiona runs to her friend Donna's. The two practice dance routines on Donna's lawn. A new dance studio has opened nearby and Donna is to begin professional lessons. Inspired by Aunt Dawn's prophesy, and her desire to learn to dance as well as Father, Fiona begs him to let her go to class with Donna. Father refuses.

Fiona sneaks off to dance class with Donna, memorizes the steps from the back of the room, and practices on her own.

#### Chapter Eight: **DREAMS SHOULD NEVER BE BROKEN**

"Dreams should never be broken. Even if they don't come true it's important to have them ..." Gramma explained. "It's the steps you take along the way that help to build the person." Fiona isn't interested in the steps along the way, she wants what she wants, now.

Fiona anticipates all of Father's needs in the hopes that he will change his mind about dance classes. It doesn't work.

Seeing Fiona's efforts being unrewarded, Momma decides to search through Father's pockets for enough money to give Fiona lessons. She wants Fiona to have more opportunities than she had as a young girl.

Fiona joins Donna at Miss Trixie's Dance Studio. This time, she is a part of the class and not just watching.

As Donna and Fiona leave the studio they see Father a block ahead arguing with two men. Fiona worries that Father owes them money, money she's using for dance lessons.

#### Chapter Nine: **BROKEN PROMISES**

Sean, Brucie, Fiona and neighbor friend **Herbie** play kick-the-can in the street. The Good Humor Ice Cream truck blasts out a happy tune. Herbie, clueless about sharing, digs into his pockets for allowance money to buy an Eskimo Pie as the other kids watch.

After dinner, Sean approaches Father about receiving his past due promised allowance. "There's a roof over yer head, food on the table and clothes on yer back..." Father shouts. He's been drinking and is in a foul mood. Momma races in and questions what's going on, but no one answers.

Later, in the middle of the night, Father's cries wake Fiona. She sneaks into the living room and watches Father in the shadows as he dances the same way he did at Morrie's Bar. "Lady Luck why have you left me," he cries. As he turns, their eyes meet. Embarrassed, Father turns away. Fiona knows this will be another secret never to come out in the open.

#### Chapter Ten: **BUTTERFLIES ARE FREE**

Gramma suggests a way for the children to earn their own money. “We could put on a tent show, kind of like a powwow,” she says.

The children make signs and put them up throughout the neighborhood. Brucie sells tickets. Sean puts up a tent in the backyard. Momma makes coffee and cookies. And Gramma helps Fiona get ready. Fiona notices Gramma’s silver comb. “Silver hair-bobbles were one of the few things your father’s grandmother brought from Scotland,” Gramma says. “So many people from so many countries gave up everything they knew to risk that long voyage from Europe to America. Thousands came for ... religious freedom ... work .. and to start a new life.”

Fiona says that there are so many people in the family she doesn’t know. Gramma replies, “But they all live inside of you, Lonestar. Even if you don’t know ‘em, they leave a mark.”

The whole neighborhood comes to the powwow, except Father. Sean, Brucie, and Johnny Whitefeather play drums. Gramma tells a Native American legend about captive butterflies that are set free. Fiona and Donna dance. The show is a huge success. The children are happy. Sean will have money to buy weight lifting apparatus, Brucie will have money to buy his Spider Man comic books and Fiona will have enough money for her dance classes.

Fiona’s joy comes to a halt as she lay in bed listening to her parents argue. Father is angry that the powwow-tent show had Native American drumming and a native story. Fiona blames herself for the fighting. Father is ranting because he believes Native Americans will be targeted again and there will be another bloodbath. “People war against anyone who’s different than they are,” he says.

Fiona, still in bed, worries about Father’s words. Questions scamper through her head. *Was there something about her bloodline that was dangerous? What was so terrible about Father that made people die?* Questions she knows no one will address.

#### Chapter Eleven: **THE TWIRLING FLOWER**

At Miss Trixie’s Dance Studio the girls work hard to prepare for the upcoming dance recital. Fiona is happier than she’s ever been. Aunt Dawn’s prophesy is coming true. She dreams about being a famous star.

The next morning Fiona feels weak, but nothing can stop her from wearing the red tutu neighbor **Harriet** made. In class, she looks in the mirror and imagines herself as the Red Flower twirling across the stage. But, when she actually does some *chaine* turns, she faints. Momma comes to get her.

Gramma comes to nurse her back to health. Father hates doctors. After Fiona has a dream about a bear, Gramma is alarmed. “Bears hibernate,” she says. “They go into the Earth for the winter to reenergize, dream and remove themselves from ... life.” Gramma hurries to find Merle, “call the doctor,” she cries.

#### Chapter Twelve: **CONTAGIOUS**

Fiona is diagnosed with a dreaded illness, Rheumatic Fever, and put to bed. “She may never walk again,” Dr. Young tells the family. Momma must give her penicillin shots. A sign, QUARANTINED–DO NOT ENTER, is nailed to the front door.

Father, feeling helpless, tries to minimize her illness, he leaves home to make extra money to pay for Fiona’s medicine in the only way he knows — gambling. He doesn’t return.

Momma gives her a penicillin shot every four hours, makes special soup and tells Fiona about her grandfather. “In the 18th and 19th centuries, thousands of Scots, like my father, your grandfather, brought their clan spirit to America ... Many of the Scots, separated from their families in the old country, intermarried with American Indians. The Amerindians were seen as ‘stupid’. Sometimes the children were taken away from their tribes and forbidden to speak their native language. So, this new mixture was forced to lie about who they were.”

Fiona wonders if that is why Father doesn’t talk about his family. *Still*, she thinks, *that was a long time ago. No reason to lie and hide now.*

With Father gone, Gramma comes more often. She lights a candle and drops a pinch of herbs into the top of the candle. “Great Spirit, Wakontah,” Gramma prays, “bring your healing light — from the Moon — stars, and Sun, into this (Fiona’s) room.” When Fiona asks about the use of tobacco, Gramma tells her “... some folks do smoke it ... but it’s really meant to be used in a sacred way. The smoke from the burning tobacco serves as a witness to my sincerity. It’s called ‘The Truth Bearer’. Prayer makes me feel like I’m not alone.”

“Me too,” Fiona replies.

#### Chapter Thirteen: **DON’T GIVE UP**

Still quarantined, Fiona watches the kids play “Red Rover” through the window in front of her bed. Younger brother Brucie loses his struggle to get into the circle of bigger neighborhood kids. Fiona thinks he needs her for support and protection.

Fiona decides she must try to walk. She must make the doctor’s prediction wrong and Aunt Dawn’s prophesy right. She draws on the power of Gramma’s prayer to bring in the healing light — from the Moon — stars, and Sun. “Do it now,” Fiona pleads.

Her lungs scream in pain as she slowly drags herself out of bed. Remembering what Gramma said about the power of breath, she forces the air to move into every part of her weak body as she inches into the room towards the dancing shoes and *tutu* Momma hung on the mirror.

Night after night she imagines dancing with Donna. The spirit of her friend joins her as she gains strength to conquer her illness.

After three months the quarantine is lifted. Excited, she asks to see Donna for real. Momma's face turns ashen. "Donna has been sick too, but...she didn't get better...she died." Angry and grief stricken, Fiona decides she will not let Donna die; she will carry her forever, in her heart.

The smell of Native American cornbread fills the room. Something Father never allowed. Fiona worries that her illness has driven Father away.

#### Chapter Fourteen: **THOU SHALT NOT**

Father still hasn't returned. With no money coming in the family has been forced to move from one relative to another.

At church, Fiona listens to Preacher MacNeal. "Thou shalt honor thy mother and father. Thou shalt ..." Fiona wonders why *Thou shalt not run away* isn't on the list.

Aunt Dawn gives her a prayer feather for her thirteenth birthday — to make her words more powerful. As she wraps the feather in colored yarn, she prays that Father will return.

One night, as Fiona sleeps next to Momma on Aunt Raven and Uncle Howard's floor, Father comes to visit through a dream. Fiona happily talks to Father. They do something that Fiona has been secretly wanting for years, they dance together. The dream is a good omen. It reassures her of his return.

#### Chapter Fifteen: **THE TRICKSTER**

A week later, after school, Sean, Willow and Fiona study the clouds in the sky for animal figures. Willow sees a rabbit. "Gramma says that rabbits are 'tricksters,'" Fiona struggles to remember Gramma's words. "It calls on you to reverse your thinking. To not take what others say or do personally."

Brucie races up the sidewalk with a bloody nose. A bully on the school playground called him a bastard. A fight ensued. Brucie asks Fiona what a bastard is. "Someone without a father," she says, painfully aware of the impact of their father's abandonment.

As the children play games after dinner Brucie announces he is not going back to school. Momma protests. Brucie says, "you didn't finish school, why should I?" Momma says she was not allowed back in school because she was pregnant. The principal was afraid it would be a bad influence on the other girls and cause an epidemic. Sean scoffs at this. "You should've told him about the European smallpox epidemic in 1837 ... it wiped out entire villages ... the Cherokee called it 'rotting face.'"

The next day, Fiona takes Brucie back to the playground to confront the bully. "Bas no beatha," she uses Father's words for life or death. "We hafta stick together." The bully is bigger than Fiona, she faces her fear and confronts the bully, using a Tecumseh warrior stance.

The next day, the children are again finding animals in the clouds. This time, Fiona sees a rabbit. She believes it is another sign that foretells that Father is coming back. Sean jokes that he sees a dragon that could eat the rabbit.

Mother comes out to take pictures of the children. As she raises her camera for a group shot, a white car passes slowly in the background. "Frank," Momma cries. Everyone looks at the white car as it suddenly speeds past. It's not Father," Sean hisses. "He's not coming back." Mother turns and rushes indoors.

"Sean's just speaking for himself, like the Trickster says," Fiona tells Willow. "Father is coming back. He's what I prayed to have for my birthday."

#### Chapter Sixteen: **CHOICES**

It was Father in the white car. He writes a loving poem and puts it in the mail chute. He wants to get back with the family.

Momma isn't sure. She's still angry. Aunt Dawn comes to read Momma's future and help her make a decision. The Talisman stones reveal a snake, and a mouse. "Snakes can be poisonous ... or healing," Aunt Dawn says. "You are the mouse. You have to learn to speak up. The choice is up to you. But, you might want to go back to school ... gives you more choices."

Fiona has a nightmare. She's lost. The fear she's going to flunk out of school and never learn everything she wants floods her mind. Brucie, too, tosses and turns in his sleep. The tension of not knowing what's happening next is getting to everybody.

Fiona tucks Father's letter under her pillow. "He's close," she murmurs. "Real close."

#### Chapter Seventeen: **MY BIRTHDAY PRESENT**

Momma writes a list of commandments for Father to sign before she'll agree to take him back. Father refuses, but is allowed to come to Fiona's birthday party. At the party, Father signs the list. *Thou shalt not run away again. Thou shalt not disappear for even one night. Thou shalt not hit the kids with a belt. Thou shalt not yell. Thou shalt not hang out at Morrie's Bar. Thou shalt not gamble.* He signs all but two. He adds, *more than once a week*, to the one about Morrie's Bar. And, *more than \$10.00 at a time*, to the one on gambling. To make up for the changes, Father proudly buys an old two-story home not far from their original

house, with the money he finally won gambling. It's big enough for them and Gramma. Fiona gets her birthday wish. They will all be together as a family.

#### Chapter Eighteen: **MY LUCKY DAY**

It's hard to make friends at their new school. Gramma gives Fiona and Sean each a pouch filled with *Kin.ni.kin.nick*, sacred leaves, to bring them luck.

Two girls in the Girl's Bathroom are trying on lipstick, *Sweet lips*. Lipstick is something Fiona is not allowed to use. It would make father angry. Fiona listens as they talk about a boy, **Skipper Roulette**, and mention how cute the new boy, Sean, is. Fiona tenses at the thought of girls being interested in her brother.

**Mr. Jesue**, the history teacher, talks about gynecocracy, "the natural superiority of the female sex." It reminds Fiona of *Kokumthema*, the Shawnee deity. Gramma told her their Native American ancestors felt that women had a double intelligence. One from the head and one from the heart. The children leave the classroom questioning this ... gynecocracy.

**Miss Baker**, the English teacher gives out a writing assignment. She also asks Fiona to see her after school. Fiona thinks that it's because she's a new student. However, when she returns after school, Miss Baker says that she is alarmed by the smell of tobacco. Fiona is to write: "I will not smoke," on the blackboard 100 times. Another girl, **Margaret**, is also being disciplined. It's for telling lies. They make friends. Margaret is part of The Big Mommas, a secret club. Fiona is intrigued and wants to join, but membership isn't easy.

At home, she tells Gramma her good news about her new friend. It has been a lucky day.

#### Chapter Nineteen: **THE CIIPAA**

Brucie is frightened by a *ciippa*, ghost, at his grade school and refuses to go to class. Gramma and Fiona go to the nearby school so Gramma can talk to the ghost and find out why he's bothering Brucie.

They make their way to the playground behind the school. Some of the children Brucie's age play on the slide or bounce balls against the back wall. One sits on a swing slowly pumping his legs back and forth.

Gramma uses her hands like divining rods. She discovers the ghost. He is the father of the boy on the swing. The boy feels guilty about his father's death. They had a fight the day before he died. "Your father wants you to know his death was not your fault," Gramma reassures the boy.

Father is furious when Gramma and Fiona get home. He had driven by Brucie's school when Gramma was standing out in the open doing "some weird Native American Ceremony."

Later that night, Fiona gets out her paper and pen to write something for English class. As she looks out the window, she sees that the house is blanketed in stars. "*If you look closely you can see animals in rock formations, clouds, and the sky,*" Gramma said. "*They bring messages of all kinds.*" In a dreamlike state Fiona sees an elk, listens to his message, then writes it in her book. *You never know where you're going to end up from one day to the next. One day I roamed the forest ... then a two legged cousin ... shot me in the chest ... I don't wake up in the forest anymore. Part of me is nailed to a wall. People party below me. They think I don't see them. But I do. One day they will know me as their four legged cousin. Until then, they won't know how to respect my part of their Earth connection.*

#### Chapter Twenty: **SECRETS**

Fiona and Margaret playfully race up the school stairs. Fiona slips on the wet floor and falls. She is embarrassed. Skipper Roulette, the boy everyone is crazy about, helps her up. Soon, Fiona becomes entranced with him as well. She rehearses what she would like to say to him. She worries whether he likes her or thinks she's just a clumsy oaf. When she tells Margaret about her fears, Margaret realizes that Fiona has never had a boyfriend and never been kissed. Margaret shows her how to kiss. Fiona feels guilty, not just about the kiss, but because it's a girl kissing her.

At the ice skating rink, Margaret gives Fiona the good news that she is accepted into The Big Mommas. Fiona senses something dangerous but pushes it away. She thinks that being in a secret club will be fun. It makes her feel important. And, as the girls are all older, it makes her feel doubly important.

She wants to tell Gramma about The Big Mommas, but it's a secret club. Instead she asks Gramma if she looks older, like fifteen. "You plannin' on skippin' a few years?" Gramma asks.

#### Chapter Twenty-One: **PLANTING SEEDS**

Gramma, Momma, and Fiona dance and sing "Fly Like an Eagle," as they prepare dinner. Father arrives home from work. The singing and dancing comes to a halt. Fiona takes Father a drink and straightens up the living room. "You're gonna make someone a fine wife one day," Father remarks. Fiona imagines herself walking down the church aisle, hand in hand with Skipper Roulette. She imagines the conversations they will have in the future.

Later she asks Gramma about love. "It's like everything else," Gramma says. "It starts out as a seed ... that holds possibility ... but has to be fed, watered, given light and cared for ... to grow."

Visions of Skipper appear in Fiona's dreams that night. *Leaves swirl over his head ... she waters them ... as the water flows out ... his entire body turns green. One of the vines wraps around her throat ... it's hard to breath.*

Skipper greets Fiona the next day at school. All the practicing she did was for naught. She is still unable to say much.

#### Chapter Twenty-Two: **GOOD NEWS**

The next Monday, at school, Skipper waits for Fiona outside English class. "I heard you wrote about an Elk ... as an assignment," Skipper says. Fiona wonders how he knows about the story. As they talk, she begins to worry that all the kids will gossip about her. Sean slaps Skipper on the back. Sure she'll be teased, Fiona turns away and joins Margaret at her table.

"Did Skipper ask you to the sock hop?" Margaret questions. "Uh,uh," Fiona replies. After school the girls watch football practice. Skipper asks if they're cold. "Eskimos like to freeze," Margaret jokes. Fiona doesn't speak. She asks Margaret, later, what she can do to not feel so awkward. "Pretend," Margaret says. "Act like he doesn't matter." "Isn't that a lie?" Fiona questions. "Sometimes lies are self protection," Margaret replies.

Two weeks later, a friend of Skipper's hands Fiona a note. When she reads it later, with Margaret, it is an invitation to the sock-hop. Fiona is thrilled. "Got more good news for ya," Margaret says. "Your trial's over. You're gonna be sworn in to The Big Momma's Friday night.

"*Fly like an eagle, flying up high,*" Fiona sings and clicks her heels while peeling carrots in the kitchen. "Looks like the dance of the vegetables," Gramma says. Momma prepares Father's drink and hands it to Fiona. "*Fly like an eagle,*" Fiona mumbles as she takes the drink in to Father.

Father doesn't like that song. "Go back into the kitchen and send your grandmother in here," he says.

When Gramma enters Father says "I've told ya a thousand times to stay away from all that Native American stuff."

"Isn't it time you told your kids the truth, Frank?" Gramma says. "The truth about your past. The more you hide it, the more it festers."

Father explodes. "It's my house, my rules."

"My husband scared me into silence for years," Gramma replies. "I wasn't allowed to have a job, get an education, or even vote ... that's what's wrong with Merle ... my husband's dead now and I'm not scared anymore."

As usual, nothing is discussed about this angry outbreak at dinner.

#### Chapter Twenty-Three: **THE BIG MOMMAS**

Friday night, Fiona climbs out the window, to meet The Big Mommas. They gather together behind Ernie's Everything Store nearby. Four girls; Cheryl, Diane, Lorraine and Margaret sing Fiona's name over and over again, then pass around a cigarette. Heat soars down Fiona's throat and chest. Sparks dance wildly behind her eyes. She doesn't understand how anybody could smoke and survive, but she does it to be a part of the group.

Margaret had told Fiona about a fun trip the girls had taken in the past, so when it is announced that their next project will be stealing something from Woolworth's down the street, Fiona is taken aback. *Still*, she reasons. *I have to do what the group says in order to fit in.*

That night she has a nightmare. She is chased by a man down a path in a woods, then handcuffed and taken away. Startled awake, she gets up and spends the rest of the night under Gramma's bed.

Gramma is surprised by her presence in the morning. Fiona asks if Gramma ever stole anything when she was young. "Stole some make-up," Gramma says. "I wanted to look white. When my father found it he sent me out back to wash the *war paint* off. Then he made me clean all the mirrors in the house so I could see who I really was, a mixture of a lot of things, not just white. Fiona wishes her father would be more like her Great-Grandfather.

#### Chapter Twenty-Four: **TOGETHERNESS IS GOOD**

As the family gathers in the kitchen talking about *Communists* Fiona sneaks down the stairs to meet The Big Mommas. *God, Wakontah, Great Spirit, she prays, don't let anybody come out.*

*Togetherness is good*, Fiona thinks as she meets the girls and they head towards Woolworth's. The store is decorated with festive paper, Santa's and elves. Fiona slowly runs her hand over a row of fountain pens, the smallest items on the counter. She picks one up and puts it in the pocket of her oversized coat. "Blam-blam-blam," her heart screams as she turns away and heads for the door.

The others steal larger items. Margaret takes a large diary, some Old Spice after-shave for Ralphy, her new boyfriend and *Sweet Lips* scarlet lipstick. Cheryl steals makeup, and Diane takes a spangly bracelet with a necklace to match. *Too much*, Fiona thinks. Their excitement, however, is contagious and soon Fiona is delighted to experience such togetherness. *Bas no beatha*, she whispers.

They take different paths home, just in case they are being followed by the store detective.

#### Chapter Twenty-Five: **GROWIN' UP**

The phone is ringing when Fiona gets home. Afraid it's the police, she races to the living room to pick it up. It's not the police. "It's Skipper Roulette," she yells to the rest of the family in the back of the house. Skipper wants to make sure she got his invitation and is coming to the sock hop. She assures Skipper that she will be there.

Father comes in, grabs the phone and slams it down. Fiona is devastated. "What're you crazy?" Momma yells when she hears what happened. "She's too young to date," Father says. "It's a dangerous world out there.... besides what kind of a cockamamie name is Skipper Roulette ... not Scot's that's for sure."

"She has to grow up some time," Momma replies. "And it's time you did too."

Fiona hates them fighting. "What happened to the rule 'no more yelling'?" *Oh, God*, Fiona thinks. *The only danger in the world isn't outside of me ... it's inside.* She races up the stairs and knocks on Gramma's door. Gramma holds her and sings, "*Ah-e-ah-e-ah-e, sometimes it's hard to see ... the path that's meant to be.*"

"Skipper'll think I didn't want to meet him at the sock-up," Fiona cries. "I can never face him ever again."

"Sometimes when what we want doesn't happen, then what we need drops in. It's part of a Divine Plan to teach us life lessons," Gramma says. Fiona doesn't like these lessons.

Momma tries to explain Father's outburst to Fiona, but Fiona knows she's just trying to smooth things out again.

At school, until vacation, Fiona avoids Skipper as best she can. When Margaret asks why she wasn't there, Fiona lies, *self protection.*

Christmas day, Margaret arrives with a gift for Fiona. It's the *Sweet lips* scarlet lipstick. Margaret also shows off a new ring, tied on a string around her neck. "Engaged-to-be-engaged, she says.

When Margaret leaves, Fiona runs upstairs and outlines her mouth with *Sweet lips*. "Older," she says to herself. "Definitely older, and not Scots." When she shows Gramma, Gramma agrees, "older," she says.

#### Chapter Twenty-Six: **SEARCHING FOR A WEDDING GOWN**

The end of March, Margaret wanted to stop in at Whites Bridal Shop, after school, to try on wedding gowns. Margaret's parents would have a conniption fit if they found out, so Fiona is sworn to secrecy. Margaret's dream is to get married and have kids. Fiona knows she is not going to get married until she's seen the world, danced, and traveled like Aunt Dawn said she would, but she accompanies her friend.

"You will be the bride of the century," Fiona says as they look into the mirror to admire Margaret in a satin gown. While trying on dresses, Margaret asks about the two shady looking guys she's seen near Fiona's house in a black Lincoln. Fiona lies about who they might be, but in her heart, she knows Father is gambling again, and losing. It's a lie of self protection, Fiona reasons. The kind Margaret has taught her to make.

After trying on dresses, Margaret wants to stop at Woolworth's to make a few notes about stuff she might need to set up house with Ralph. Stuff that was too big to steal. Fiona never wants to go into Woolworth's ever again. She still has nightmares about the shoplifting date with The Big Mommas.

Once home, Fiona asks Gramma what she wore at her wedding. "You plannin' on havin' a weddin' soon?" Gramma asks. "Just curious," Fiona answers. Gramma suggests that she wipe her lipstick off before Father gets home.

#### Chapter Twenty-Seven: **WOMEN WORK TOO**

Momma wants to show Fiona her wedding dress. Fiona thinks Gramma said something to her. Fiona is disappointed that it isn't satin. Momma tells Fiona how she fell in love with Father, how they danced 'till their feet turned into blocks of cement, how he was special. Fiona thinks Momma is special too. "At the time," Momma says. "I felt like a silly 15 year old school girl. Your Dad was 17, he could fix anything; clocks, cameras, washing machines, car motors." Momma tells her about how Ford gave young men of every culture, color and nationality the opportunity of a lifetime by educating them at his factory.

Fiona asks about her grandfather. "My father was tough on us," Momma said. "He didn't let us have lessons of any kind outside of the house. "Thare's enuf of yas hare to teach one another," he'd say.

At dinner, Momma talks to Father about getting a job. "You have women working at the plant?" Momma asks. "Got a bit of Everythin at the plant," Father says. "Even got some of the Ku Klux Klan."

Momma is setting the stage to make changes and have some sense of control over her life.

The phone rings. From Father's words, everyone can tell that he owes money for gambling.

#### Chapter Twenty-Eight: **MOMMA GOT A JOB**

The next Friday before Father got home, Momma is excited to tell the family that she has a job at Koski's Car Sales as a receptionist. Mr. Koski didn't care if she finished high school or not. The family celebrates with Gramma's home baked cake.

Momma notices that Sean has had a growth spurt. Fiona's jealous. She wants to have long legs and look like the dancers she's seen in magazines. Sean teases Fiona that she's a little squirt and never going to grow. A fight ensues. Sean pulls her arm behind her back as far as it will go. It's painful.

Gramma steps in. "You don't have to hurt her to prove you're bigger and stronger," she says. Sean is taking on some of Father's controlling behaviors. Momma is upset he is ruining her celebration.

Fiona practices running, jumping and leaping over obstacles in between chores at home. The following Saturday she races Margaret to White's Bridal Shop. When they stop, Fiona notices a colored silk scarf peeking out of Margaret's blouse. She pulls on it. Several colored scarves, tied together, come out in her hand. "What's this?" Fiona asks. Margaret is embarrassed. She has stuffed her bra. Something Fiona has never thought about anyone doing.

At home, she asks Momma if she ever stuffed her bra. "Strange questions," Momma replies. As they clean up the kitchen, after dinner, Momma says that she and Gramma have been talking, and they think it would be a good idea if Momma gave Fiona money from her first paycheck for dance lessons. Fiona is thrilled. "All this time," she says. "I thought you'd forgotten."

#### Chapter Twenty-Nine: **DANCING**

Gramma walks with Fiona to the dance studio, two blocks away. Fiona is impressed by the photos on the wall of Miss Jackie. One shows her doing the splits, upside down, while suspended in midair. A feat that inspires hard work. The transition to dance class has been done so quickly that there hasn't been time to shop for the correct attire. Georgia, one of the girls in the dressing room, suggests that she talk to Miss Jackie in the office. She saves hand-me-downs.

Miss Jackie's office is filled with costumes, masks, faded ballet slippers. It is a dancers paradise. "Help yourself," Miss Jackie says. "When it doesn't fit anymore, you wash it, sew it if needed and put it back."

Fiona digs through the boxes to find a chiffon skirt, leotard and slippers. She hurriedly puts them on and rushes out onto the dance floor where Miss Jackie calls out various positions and movements for the class to follow.

The next week, Fiona dances everywhere. She leaps to touch the tallest leaf, races cars, and stretches into every pretzel shape she can think of.

"It's good to see you strong again," Momma says. "That Rheumatic Fever you had last year ... made you so weak ... it was scary."

#### Chapter Thirty: **GRAMMAS NEVER DIE**

The end of April, Georgia rushes into dance class. She played Spin-the-Bottle and had to kiss a boy for the first time. Fiona remembers kissing Margaret. Guilt reoccurs, "Thou shalt nots," ring in her ears.

Miss Jackie hollers for the girls to hurry up. Once they are on the floor, the girls perform leaps across the floor. Fiona is congratulated on doing so well.

At home, Fiona notices a gift box in Sean's pocket. When prodded he tells her it's for Loretta. Fiona is jealous. All the boys like Loretta, she's beautiful and curvy.

Saturday morning, before dance class, Father picks on Brucie. His anger escalates when Brucie spills orange juice on the floor. As Father begins to slap Brucie, Gramma yells, "Touch him and I'll call the police." Momma cleans up the floor.

At dance class, Fiona is distracted by the chaos at home and doesn't perform as well as usual. Miss Jackie warns her that dancing takes practice. In the dressing room, Fiona feels dizzy. She puts her head down.

"Your visitor here?" Georgia asks. "I'm always tired when I get my *period*," Jillian moans. "Try drinking milk," Wanda suggests. Fiona nods to make the girls think they are right. Another lie of self-preservation, she thinks. She is embarrassed that she has not developed like the others. It puts her in a funk.

Later, Gramma asks what's wrong. Fiona tells her that everyone seems to have their *menstrual cycle* but her. "Georgia calls it her visitor. Jillian calls it her *period*. Gramma thinks those are strange terms for the mystery of becoming a woman. She explains that in her grandmother's time they called it *moontime*. "It was a time when women were seen to be very powerful. They held healing energy and could see and understand things that others couldn't." Fiona is angry, she doesn't care if she sees things. She just wants to be normal.

Gramma educates her about the puberty ceremony. "... women elders built a special wikiup, a small oval hut, down by the river. After fasting for a few days the elders led my grandmother to the hut where they shared experiences about what it was like to be a woman. Then they left her alone to talk to her ancestors. Sometimes they left symbols behind to assist in her journey of discovery."

Lonestar is nonplussed. She is sure, she'll never sit in a wikiup and share stuff with elders. "somethin' inside of me is missin'." she insists.

Gramma assures her that nothin' is missing. "You were born with eggs hidden inside of you," Gramma says. "Eggs so small that you'd need a magnifying glass to see 'em." Gramma continues to explain that when she carried Fiona's mother in her womb, she also carried her mother's future children. "Your mother was born with my eggs inside of her," she says.

Fiona thinks this is crazy. But, she is intrigued by the thought that she is a part of her Gramma.

"Gramma's never die," Gramma says. "They just keep bein' reborn over and over again, *e'ne*, yes."

As they turn the corner near home, they see a black Lincoln. The one Margaret mentioned. Gramma's face turns pale. Beads of sweat bubble out onto her forehead.

Margaret has to stop going to White's to try on wedding dresses. Her mother is asking a lot of questions about what the girls do after school.

#### Chapter Thirty-One: **EVERYTHING HAS ITS SEASON**

The beginning of June, new flowers continue to pop up around the house. Things no one planted. "Miracles of life," Gramma says. "Just when we think somethin's dead, it comes back." "You treat everything like it's a relative," Father snaps. Momma finds some invaders. The children are given tools to get rid of the dandelions and other weeds.

Afterwards, Gramma waters the plants that weren't killed. "Everythin' has it's season.", she says. "Except me," Fiona replies. "Everythin'," Gramma repeats.

#### Chapter Thirty-Two: **DO I LOOK SIXTEEN?**

Fiona gets up early. The Big Mommas are planning a trip to Canada to a nightclub for an afternoon teen dance. Fiona can't tell her parents. It's yet another lie of self protection. She is excited and scared at the same time. She breathes in the fumes of the *Kin.ni.kin.nick*, sacred leaves, in the pouch that Gramma gave her some time ago. Gramma said that the Shawnee Native Americans used tobacco for more than good luck. It was called a "Truth Bearer" or "Witness". It carried prayers to the Great Spirit and also bore witness to the sincerity of the wish.

Fiona gets out of bed, opens a drawer, takes out a candle, sets it in a dish on top of her dresser and lights it. "Great Spirit, God, Jesus, Wakontah, be with me today as I join my friends for our special trip. She takes a pinch of tobacco out of her pouch and drops it into the flames. Smoke curls upwards toward the ceiling.

The phone rings, it's Miss Armstrong, a neighbor who always complains about Brucie's newspaper delivery being eaten by her dog. "Take her two papers," Father says. "One for her, one for the dog."

Gramma has been sick. Fiona checks in on her and tells her not to worry if she isn't back for dinner.

As soon as it's quiet downstairs, Fiona sneaks out the door to meet The Big Mommas. When they meet Fiona discovers that the proposed dance is only for sixteen year olds. Margaret has copied a birth certificate that indicates that they are twins. Fiona isn't sure she looks sixteen. "Stick close to us ... everybody'll just think you're a shrimp."

They board the bus headed for downtown. On the ride, Margaret takes out her make-up kit and goes to work on Fiona. The other girls take turns applying make-up to themselves. Fiona digs out her Sweet Lips Lipstick for the final touch.

They arrive at the Metropole Club at noon. Gold lights blink off and on around the sign above the door. The lights make the club seem even more exciting than Fiona imaged. There is a man guarding the entrance. He is checking the birth certificates of those who look underage. Fiona prays he won't check hers. He doesn't.

Once inside they dance one special dance after the other. Some in a group, others with boys. **Jonathan** slips Margaret a note with his phone number on it.

"If I Knew You Were Comin' I'd've Bake a Cake," is playing as the girls leave. "Perfect song for you, Lonestar," Lorraine says. "Since it is almost your birthday."

They take their make-up off on the bus going home. "What's ralphy gonna say about you goin' dancin without him?" Fiona whispers to Margaret. "We're not gonna tell him, are we?" Margaret replies as she tears up Jonathan's note.

#### Chapter Thirty-Three: **TROUBLE**

Father yells for Fiona to come into the living room. Fiona is afraid he's found out about her dance lessons or The Big Mommas. When she discovers that Margaret's mother called to tell her parents she's been trying on wedding dresses, she is shocked.

Father thinks she must be pregnant. "It's a tough world out there," Father says. "People judge. They look for things to attack you for." He is on a verbal tirade.

Fiona is distraught that Father thinks she is capable of something impossible for her to do.

Father wants to spank her. He starts to take off his belt. Momma jumps up from the sofa and stands between the two, "No more hitting, Frank. You promised." Father pushes Momma away. She falls to the floor. Fiona turns to help her up.

Sean rushes into the room. He sees Fiona helping Momma up from the floor and Father advancing toward Fiona with his belt off. Sean steps between Fiona and Father. Father brings his fist back and aims it at Sean's face. Sean ducks out of the way. Father stumbles forward, Falls and cuts his forehead. Blood runs down his face.

Gramma, awakened from her sick bed, rushes downstairs and sees the family in chaos. She calls the police for assistance. When they arrive everyone lies and minimizes Father's rage.

#### Chapter Thirty-Four: **LIES**

Fiona tells Gramma how betrayed she feels by her best friend. And, she can't understand why Father would think she was capable of something stupid like getting pregnant.

At dance class, Fiona has difficulty focusing. Father's accusations and Margaret's lies, all whiz through her head.

Margaret comes over after Dance class. "Want to go shopping, Lonestar?" she asks with a smile. Fiona is outraged. "Shopping?" she says. "After what you did to me?" Margaret didn't realize that her mother called. She tries to defend herself, but Lonestar won't listen. She sends her away.

A few hours later, Margaret returns. She slips a note under the door. It is a confession and an apology. Lonestar puts a DO NOT DISTURB on her bedroom door. She is not going to join the family for dinner.

When Momma knocks on her door to see if she's okay, Lonestar slides Margaret's note under the door for Momma to read.

That night Fiona has a hard time sleeping. Father's voice repeats in her head. "People judge. They look for things to attack you for." For what she wonders. Thoughts swirl through her head. They make her dizzy. Visions come.

She sees herself in a large meadow in front of a tombstone marked, 1923. Five men on horseback taunt her. A woman rises from the earth in front of the tombstone, she has dark long hair like the woman in the photo in Father's drawer. "Run Tsula, run," she cries. A little boy comes out from behind the woman and reaches a hand out for Fiona. She wakes up with a start.

#### Chapter Thirty-Five: **BURYING GOLDY**

A week later Father still hasn't said anything about accusing Fiona of being pregnant. "He thinks if you don't talk about bad stuff, then it never happened," Fiona says.

Momma finds a sparrow in her linen cupboard, a sign of death. She sends for her sisters. Aunt Dawn offers to do a Talisman Reading. While the sisters talk in the living room, Brucie screams for help.

The family rushes out to find a golden bundle on the ground crying in pain. It is their dog, Goldy. He's choking on a chicken bone. "I tried to stop her," Brucie cries. "She was old, Brucie," Sean replies. "It was time."

Father digs a grave. The kids make Prayer Feathers. A pale Gramma sets up a special Native American ceremony. "Great Spirit," Gramma prays. "Creator of all things, large and small. Take the sweet spirit of Goldy and let her run freely in the green meadows of the stars. Give her the joy she has given us. Give her the strength she was given to us. Let her take the love we hold in our hearts, with her now, as she crosses the bridge leading from this world to the next. We will miss her. *Ho.*"

#### Chapter Thirty-Six: **LOST**

Fiona begins to spend more and more time under the dining room table. She wants to know how it feels to be buried in the earth like her friend Donna, the woman in her dream, and of course their dog. While she is trying to figure out how to contact the dead, she overhears Momma talking about how worried she is about Gramma to her sisters. She pulls herself out from under the table. "What's wrong with Gramma?" she asks nervously. "Your Gramma's not getting better," Momma tells her. "She has a grave illness." Fiona can't believe that Gramma won't recover. "You only saw one bird, Momma. One bird is one death. Goldy's gone. We can't lose Gramma too. Besides, she told me that Grammas never die."

Fiona takes a tray up to Gramma's room. As she waits at the door she hear her singing, "*Morning is coming. It's time to see the light.*" A stronger, deeper voice repeats Grammas words. When Fiona enters, she finds a visitor. It is Johnny Whitefeather. Fiona doesn't know it yet, but he is helping her to write her farewell song. The one that will help her to find her ancestors in the stars.

Fiona spoon feeds Gramma as Johnny shares some past memories of their childhood. Gramma talks about the 'Circle of Light'. Fiona asks what that is. "We all have a circle of friends in the Star World," Gramma says. "Even though they are far away, they're always with us. Some are our teachers, some are there for us to teach. We all learn from each other's mistakes. And from the good stuff too."

Later, as Fiona sits on the front steps and stairs out over the empty field where Goldy used to leave her scent, she sees a flash of gold fur and smells a doggy smell. When Margaret walks up she asks if she saw anything unusual. Margaret didn't see anything. She proceeds to show Fiona her new ring. "Engaged to be engaged," Margaret says. "You're not married?" Fiona questions. "Naw. Not yet," Margaret laughs.

Fiona doesn't laugh with her. Margaret thinks it is a sign that she has her *visitor*. "You have to remind me all the time," Fiona bustles.

#### Chapter Thirty-Seven: **GRAMMA'S SONG**

Gramma's illness worsens. Fiona continues to take meals up to her on a tray. Gramma has Fiona read letters she was saving from her Grandmother as a special way to say "goodbye." Fiona becomes alarmed at the thought that Gramma will die.

"My body is tired. Now my spirit needs to be free," Gramma says. "But, I will live inside of you. In your thoughts, your dreams and everything we've shared. I live in the eggs you were born from, and the ones you will give birth from. I live in that invisible chord that connects our hearts no matter where I go."

Fiona spends the final night in Gramma's bed. In the morning, Gramma's spirit leaves her body like a long stream of perfect blue light. Fiona is devastated. She doesn't know how to find that invisible chord Gramma talked about. Fiona calls out to Jesus, The Great Spirit, *Kokomthena*, over and over again.

The others hear her cry. They rush in to help. But, there is nothing to do. Gramma is gone.

Fiona keeps her distance from the others at the funeral. Johnny and his friends beat out a soft rhythmic pattern on the drum with their padded sticks. He sings Gramma's farewell song.

Gramma's death reminds Father of his mother's death. He is overcome with grief. Mother prods Father to tell their kids the truth. Father's mother was Cherokee. She was killed by some local drunks when Father was a child. Fiona recognizes her dream in Father's memory of his mother's death. Father's father forbade anyone to mention his mother's name ever again. From then on they were simply Scots. It was safer that way. It was a time when Native American children were taken away from their families, forbidden to follow their religion, or speak their native language. A dangerous time.

Fiona wakes up in the night. She has her *moontime*. Excited, she runs next door to Gramma's room to tell her, but the bed is empty.

Fiona wants a puberty ceremony to mark her transition from being a child to becoming a woman. Her father forbids it. She refuses to go to school, eat, or leave her room until she gets one.

Father takes her food, but she won't eat. He pleads with her, but she won't budge. Father swats her across the face. Her nose bleeds. Momma is furious. She too is tired of living a lie. She locks Father out of the bedroom. Fiona wins the battle and will have the ceremony

#### Chapter Thirty-Eight: **THE PUBERTY CEREMONY**

Aunt Dawn, Aunt Raven, Mother, and cousin Violet sit in the *wikiup* that Johnny Whitefeather built in the backyard for the puberty ceremony.

Aunt Dawn gives Fiona three objects to help her to listen to the *wisdom within*. One of them is the gray speckled stone she thought was lost. Without Gramma to guide her, Fiona is afraid she won't be up to the task.

When her relatives leave, Fiona sits in the *wikiup* and asks the Great Spirit for help. Slowly, powerful messages come from each object. But she still misses Gramma.

Suddenly, a long arm reaches up and pulls her down a long tunnel. A young woman leads her to a circle of other women sitting around a fire pit.

Fiona recognizes that the woman is her Gramma, but not old like when she passed over, she stumbles forward and reaches out to hold onto her.

Fiona notices that there is light all around her. It begins to expand. A growth spurt of some kind. The colors of the rainbow leap out from her body and join the colors from the fire. "I am the light," Fiona cries. "Yes," Gramma replies. "Now you know."

Fiona opens her eyes. She reaches down to touch the blankets beneath her. She is back in the *wikiup*, but she has changed. She steps outside.

Momma, Aunt Dawn, Aunt Raven, and Violet walk towards her, following a path of lit candles. Johnny and her brothers are playing drums nearby and her father is dancing, dressed in full Scots' regalia to their rhythms. All her relatives from the first vision, as well as Gramma, join in as they dance across the soft grass.

The cool air brushes Fiona's cheeks as the Sun slowly tiptoes over the horizon. The relatives fade away. Fiona turns to find Gramma again. But she is gone.

A flash of light beams down from the sky and surrounds Fiona. "I'm here, Lonestar. I will always be here watching over you." Gramma's voice whispers inside her head. Choral singing can be heard in the distance, "Life is a circle. A circle never ends." Fiona looks up and smiles as she joins the distant voices with her own.