

San-Ko and Tahlee Tdahn©

by

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One day San-Ko was coming along a small winding forest trail, when he noticed a gathering of Kiowa's ahead in a small, lush meadow. They were speaking back and forth amongst themselves in obvious distress. The men were shouting while the women stood together consoling each other. This was not a common sight for San-Ko to see Kiowa people in this condition so he decided to go in for a closer look. He called out to them asking what was causing them to behave in such a way.

One of the women rushed to him and grabbed his hand, "Our children are lost!" He looked from face to face and knew that this was a serious situation...a new situation. In times past, he knew that from time to time a child or two would go missing. This was often attributed to the Kxope-Saw-Pohl, mountain ogres who would catch wayward children failing to listen and going where they didn't belong - but this was different.

"All the children!?" he asked. Their heads nodded somberly as he could hear quiet sobbing amongst the group.

"Will you help us?" He paused before answering. You see, San-Ko was related to Sain-Day, a trickster who spent his days working on schemes that would fill his belly or help him acquire items he deemed necessary – but San-Ko was much older and had given up those ways millennia ago – so he spent his days helping those he contacted in his travels.

San-Ko knew that he had to help the Kiowa find their children to insure they would survive into the future, "I will help you! Now where did you last see them? Take me to where they disappeared so I can find clues as to where they were taken."

The lead warrior stepped forward, "They haven't disappeared but they are lost to us!"

Hearing the warrior's description brought a frown to San-Ko's brow, "If they haven't disappeared but are lost, then I don't understand?"

The men motioned for him to follow them and they started off down a different trail amongst the tall pines and aspen trees. They followed the trail toward a low mountain with rocky outcrops and vegetation covering the majority of the slopes. It wasn't long before they came upon a clearing and the Kiowa stopped there pointing to what was inside. San-Ko moved to the edge of the clearing and looked through the tree branches.

In the middle of the clearing he could see a group of children huddled in a circle looking intently at something on the ground. There were several wisps of steam or smoke rising up from the middle of this odd group; he could also hear and feel a deep hum that pulsed in a rhythmic pattern. He thought to himself that it sounded like the largest bullfrog he had ever heard but it also sounded a bit strange.

San-Ko moved in for a closer look. He could hear them muttering to themselves obviously about the object in the midst of them, but San-Ko couldn't see what was holding their attention so intently. He couldn't take it any longer and decided to go in for a closer look. As he drew near, he could hear each young Kiowa muttering something and they were staring intently at what he could now make out to be a smoldering, glowing rock in the midst of a small crater. He expected them to acknowledge him as he walked up but they didn't seem to notice he was even there; they continued to stare at the strange rock. He stood there and scratched his head for a few minutes before he spoke, "Kee thah gyah daw!" He tried a normal pleasantry commenting on how beautiful the day was...still no

response from the group. San-Ko squinted and moved closer to a small girl, getting right next to her head. He could now see into her eyes and noticed the pupils were replaced with what looked like the night sky.

He was about to shake the girl and ask her what was wrong when a voice spoke from the rock. "Leave us!"

San-Ko looked at the rock and almost spoke back but instead turned back to the girl. "Ah-p'ee what do you see?"

She spoke back to him slowly, "new...different..."

Her answer was cut off by the voice again, "Leave us! I have shown them a new way from the Khoiye Hoh Aun! (Kiowa Way) I am their father now!"

San-Ko didn't speak back to the rock – instinctively he knew that it would be a mistake. He focused his attention back on the children. He moved through the youth and noticed tears coming down their cheeks but they were intently focused on the rock still smoldering in the ground. He decided to go back to the group of men and women hiding at the clearing's edge.

"The children are not lost to you. I see they want to come back but they are being held by something...someone in the rock offering them a new way from the Khoiye Hoh Aun." He looked from face to face, "I have a way to get them back but I will need each of you to help me!" The Kiowa were eager to get their children back and agreed to do what he asked. He told them that he wanted each one to find their children and begin singing on his command. He told them they needed to sing the words as loudly as they could and he would do the rest.

*My child I see you through my eyes; see me through your eyes,
Look through the dream; see our love's cord and draw near,
Breathe now, live and walk with your people again.*

San-Ko positioned the Kiowas around their children and motioned for them to sing. In unison, each parent began to sing as loudly as possible. The rock began to pulsate with energy, the sky darkened above them, but the singing continued.

"Leave us!" bellowed the voice again.

This time San-Ko spoke directly to the rock, "I see you now and speak to you Tahlee Tdahn!"

With that the rock transformed into human form but neither reflecting nor absorbing light – instead the being looked exactly like the eyes of the children. San-Ko could hear the parents singing and started singing his own song toward this being.

*I see you through my eyes; see me through your eyes,
Look to me now across the ages, my light exceeds their light,
Breathe now and battle with me, I offer my life as sacrifice.*

San-Ko and Tahlee Tdahn embraced in combat as the children began to stumble backwards. Their parents catching them, continued singing.

The warrior who first spoke to San-Ko grabbed his daughter and could see her eyes begin to clear as he sang to her. He glanced back to see San-Ko being completely engulfed by the stars. For a brief moment, the eyes of San-Ko looked to him and he could see a smile of satisfaction as he could see the Kiowa were safe. The stars covered his

body and face, until only one eye remained free. The warrior saw a tear drop from San-Ko's eyes until he was completely covered. With a flash of light, they were both gone.

The Kiowa were left in the clearing clutching their children, hugging and kissing them, thankful for their release.

From that day forward, the Kiowa continued to tell of the day that San-Ko saved them from destruction. Their love for each other and San-Ko's sacrifice allowed the children to be free and live in the Khoiye Hoh Aun – The Kiowa Way of Life. Over the generations, San-Ko and Tahlee Tdahn continue this fight, each one gaining ground, only to have the other take it back. This battle is still evident in our people as we fight to keep traditions in the face of new ways.

San-Ko continues the battle...but we must help him by singing to our children.