

## CHAPTER 1

1785

IT DIDN'T LOOK like a school.

The only school that Broken Trail had ever seen before was a small wooden building with a belfry perched on its roof. In no way did that little schoolhouse in Canajoharie resemble the large stone building facing him now, with its tall white pillars and massive double doors.

Above it flew the flag of the new United States of America—a field of stripes with a circle of stars in the canton. The building was set back from the road. In front of it was a grassy field. Behind it were lesser buildings, built of wood. In the distance rose Vermont's dark and rolling hills.

He would not have known it was a school if he had not seen the boys, a mob of youths with coppery skin and cropped black hair. They were racing over the grassy field in front of the big building, lacrosse racquets upraised, hurling the ball from one to another, shouting war cries as they ran.

As he sat astride his horse, looking at the school, Broken Trail for the first time felt a little afraid. Those lacrosse players would be his schoolmates for the next three years. He hoped that they would be his friends. Not just friends, but fellow warriors, comrades in the great mission that lay ahead. They would be the builders of a nation. That was the dream that Thayendanegea, the great Mohawk chief, had shared with him.

A difficult task lay ahead. How could he possibly achieve either Thayendanegea's goals or his own? "*Oki!* Help me," he whispered.

He pressed his hand against his chest and felt the shape of the amulet he wore under his deerskin poncho. His amulet was a small leather bag packed with the hair and one fang of a wolverine, his *oki*, the spirit guardian who would keep him safe from all dangers of war and of the hunt. As he felt its shape, his confidence returned. He didn't know what was going to happen to him at Sedgewick School, but he would be ready for whatever challenge lay before him.

Now he must find President Webber and tell him that he had arrived. He turned his horse's head onto the path across the grassy field. When he had ridden halfway to the building,

the swarm of boys changed direction. They appeared to be charging straight at him and his horse.

The horse shied. Broken Trail slid sideways. As he regained his balance, one of the players turned his head, still running, and looked at him. He was a tall, thin boy with the tattoo of a snake on his left cheek.

His eyes met Broken Trail's just for an instant. Then the swarm changed direction again and surged away.

Broken Trail's horse crossed the rest of the green at a canter. At a tug on the cord looped around his lower jaw, the horse stopped in front of the main doors.

"I didn't know it would be so big," Broken Tail mused, sharing his thoughts with Dark Cloud. The black stallion flicked his ears, which was his usual response.

After dismounting and tying his horse to a hitching post, Broken Trail stood looking up at the great heavy doors, doors that seemed intended not to admit him but to shut him out. Then, taking a deep breath, he strode forward, grasped the door handle, and stepped inside.

He had entered a lobby panelled in dark wood. Directly ahead, the lobby led into a hall with doors on both sides. On his left, a staircase ascended to the second storey. On his right, an elderly man wearing a black frock coat was seated at a table beside a closed door. He had a narrow face, a long pointed nose, and grey hair tied back at the nape of his neck.

On the wall behind him hung a life-size portrait of a stout gentleman, also dressed in black, wearing a snow-white wig.

The gentleman in the painting stared accusingly at Broken Trail.

The elderly man at the table looked along the length of his pointed nose at Broken Trail in his deerskin clothes and bristling headdress.

“I presume you are the new scholar? President Webber is expecting you.” Placing both hands on the table, he pushed himself up from his chair. “Please remind me of your name.”

“Broken Trail.”

“Goodness gracious! That will never do.”

What would never do?

Without explaining his meaning, the elderly man rapped on the closed door.

“Enter!” came a deep voice from within.

The man opened the door and lifted his hand in a gesture directing Broken Trail to advance. As soon as he had entered the room, the door closed quietly behind him.

Seated behind a desk of dark polished wood was the stout gentleman who a moment before had stared at him from the painting in the lobby.

Broken Trail raised his hand, palm forward in a warrior’s salute.

President Webber stood up, came around from behind the desk, and thrust his right hand under Broken Trail’s nose.

“So you are Moses Cobman! Lesson number one. We shake hands. That’s how civilized men greet each other.”

Broken Trail didn’t like the word “civilized,” at least not the

way President Webber said it. But since he wanted to be off to a good start, he grasped the proffered hand and shook it firmly.

“We’ll shape you up quickly enough,” Webber assured him. “It’s not as if you’re really an Indian.”

Broken Trail caught his breath, then realized there would be no point in trying to explain.

“Captain Brant has written to me about you,” Webber said. “He enclosed a letter with your fees.” Webber returned to his desk, sat down, and took a folded sheet of paper from a drawer. Pointing to a chair placed in front of his desk, he indicated that Broken Trail should take a seat.

Broken Trail shrugged his carrying basket from his shoulders, set it on the carpet, and sat down.

Webber glanced at the letter. “Captain Brant believes you have the potential to be a fine scholar. ‘Diamond in the rough’ is what he calls you. He wants you to have a gentleman’s education that will prepare you to assist him in negotiations with white diplomats as well as with his plans to make a better future for the native people. Well, Sedgewick School is the best place to make that happen.”

He laid the letter on his desk. “Your background is highly unusual. Loyalist family. Father and two brothers fought for King George. Oneida Indians captured you when you were ten years old, adopted you, brought you up to be a warrior. I can see why Captain Brant chose you. You have a foot in both camps, just as he does.”

He returned the letter to the drawer.

“Now, Moses, we’ll begin by discussing your studies here.”

“Sir, don’t call me Moses. My name is Broken Trail.”

“Against the rules. No Indian names allowed. If you didn’t have a Christian name, we’d give you one.” He gave Broken Trail a close look. “You have been baptized, I trust?”

Broken Trail remembered the chapel with the hard wooden pews where long ago he had spent so many hours listening to sermons.

“Yes, sir. I’m sure I’ve been baptized.”

“Good. Good. Most of our scholars are heathens when they arrive. At Sedgewick School, conversion and education go hand in hand.” He leaned back in his chair. “Our main purpose is to train young Indians to serve as missionaries to their own people. However, we admit a few, like yourself, who have other worthy goals. For those capable of higher education, we have a college as well as a school.”

“What’s the difference?” asked Broken Trail.

“The school teaches mainly the basics: reading, writing, and arithmetic. It prepares students to enter the college. At present we have fifty-eight students in the school but only three in the college. Few Indians see the value of Latin and Greek.

“What are Latin and Greek?”

“They are the classical languages spoken by people who lived two thousand years ago.”

“Who speaks them now?”