



Rachel and the Hired Gun

By Elaine Levine

This is the fourth installment in my serialized prequel to my first book, Rachel and the Hired Gun. You can catch the earlier segments on my website, www.elainelevine.com or on www.MySpace.com\ElaineLevine. I'd love to hear from you--drop me a note to let me know what you think of these clips!

--Elaine (elvine@elainelevine.com)

Elaine Levine is a wonderfully fresh and original voice in western romance. RACHEL AND THE HIRED GUN is full of fast-paced action and powerful emotions. I loved it!

--Bestselling author, Joan Johnston

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Clip 4: Sager Takes a Name

Life in the white man's world begins...

Eyes of the Wolf sat on his enemy's horse, adrift in the endless hills of short grass. His brother's brief pronouncement took his entire life from him, leaving him no future, no past, and no People. The braves who had accompanied his brother had already fanned out to take the news of his changed status to the neighboring tribes. Soon, he would be invisible to them as well.

"Your destiny lies among the white men," his brother had said. But that was not a destiny he wanted. He didn't know how to be a white man. He could speak English, somewhat—thanks to Albert Sager--but he couldn't write it. He knew how his People were treated in the white man's towns. That was no way to live.

The wind whispered there was one place he could go; he could return to Sid Taggart. He would make his enemy teach him how to be a white man.

It was nearly nightfall when Eyes of the Wolf rode into Sid Taggart's ranch yard. Some of his enemy's men moved about, tending to evening chores. They stopped and stared. One of them ran ahead of him and rushed inside Sid Taggart's home. Eyes of the Wolf dismounted at the same corral he'd taken his enemy's horse from. He rubbed his mount down, then turned him out in the corral and fetched feed for him.

Several men drew near, gathering on either side of the drive that led to the house. Eyes of the Wolf walked between the two rows of men, looking at each one, judging the fight in him. No one challenged him, though some laughed and pointed at his hair. People had come out to the porch of the house--Sid Taggert, a woman, the White Buffalo Boy, and others. The boy broke free of the woman's hold and ran down the steps, stopping almost on top of Eyes of the Wolf's feet.

"You came back!" the boy looked up at him, his grin wide, his eyes alight.

"Yes."

"Father was ever so worried. Are you gonna stay this time?"

"Going, Logan," the woman corrected him from the porch.

The boy's face tightened. "Are you going to stay this time?"

Eyes of the Wolf did not answer that question. He had no answer to give. "Is that what you are called—Logan?"

"I'm Logan Taggert, but you can call me Logan. You're name is Brent Taggert."

"Taggert because of your father?"

"Yep."

No. Eyes of the Wolf would live in his enemy's home. He would learn the white man's ways. But he would never be Brent Taggert. Sid Taggert was not his father: he was his mother's murderer. He walked around the boy and approached the porch. Sid Taggert came down the steps toward him. Eyes of the Wolf kept his expression blank, weathering his enemy's close inspection.

Sid Taggert took hold of his shoulders in a talon-like grip. "You came home, Brent. You came back." His words still made no sense to Eyes of the Wolf. This wasn't home. It had never been home. Perhaps Sid Taggert mistook him for someone else. But why would he go to the People and steal a son? He already had one.

Eyes of the Wolf broke free, but Sid Taggert pulled him back. "Goddamn it! You are my son. Do you hear me?" As he shouted these words, puffs of hot breath buffeted Eyes of the Wolf's face. "Your mother was pregnant when she was taken by the Sioux. I've looked for you your whole life. "

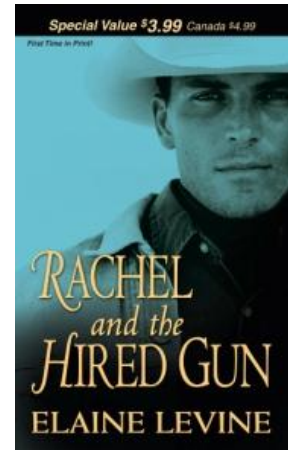
It was a lie. His mother was dead. And Sid Taggert had killed her. He yanked free again, glaring at his enemy, then turned his back on him and walked toward the woman on the porch. She must be the White Buffalo Boy's mother. With her gray eyes and flax-colored hair, she seemed made from moonlight and shadows. He stared at her, unable to comprehend such an ethereal appearance; she was the most beautiful creature Eyes of the Wolf had ever seen.

The pale expanse of her neck and upper chest was open to his gaze, and he took a long look. He moved up the steps, mesmerized, wanting to touch her, wondering what she smelled like. A desert rose, maybe, or wind from a snow-crested mountain. A breeze swept through the porch but did not disturb her tightly pinned hair. Beneath his perusal, her breathing quickened. He watched the soft flesh of her chest rise and fall. Women in his village did not show so much of themselves.

Sid Taggert climbed the steps behind him. "This is your home, boy. You are Brent Taggert."

Eyes of the Wolf shut his eyes, closing his mind to the image of Moon Woman. Names were as important to these people as they were to his own--it was his first lesson. To appease them, Eyes of the Wolf decided he would indeed take a white man's name--but it would be a name of his choosing. There was only one white man he knew and respected.

Eyes of the Wolf kept his back to his enemy as he held the gaze of the White Buffalo Boy's mother. "I will be called Sager."



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That's the end of Clip 4. Email me at elvine@elainelevine.com to let me know what you thought of it! Check out my [website](#) for more clips and news about my upcoming releases!

Until next time...over and out!

Elaine Levine

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