The Bone Remembered

B Alan Bourgeois · Opening excerpt · 1 of 2

The desert wind came not as a warning, but a welcome. It swept across the canyon floor with a hush like breath through dry reeds, lifting the scent of warm rock, distant mesquite smoke, and the ghosts of forgotten rivers. The sand whispered as it moved—coarse and fine all at once—gathering into eddies around the firepit, slithering over the nylon skin of a half-zipped tent. It found them there, tangled in sleep-slick skin and languid breath, the red glow of an LED lantern casting their limbs in the hue of slow blood.

Cassie lay sprawled on her back, her long dark hair braided into chaos across the rolled-out sleeping bag. The canvas clung to her thighs, sweat drying along her ribs. Tyler, naked and lean, pressed against her side, his chin resting in the soft hollow between her collarbone and shoulder. They hadn't spoken in nearly twenty minutes. They hadn't needed to. The world had slipped away into rhythm—breath, sweat, skin, sigh, repeat.

Above them, the night pressed in thick and velvet. Stars sprawled in their cosmic spasm across the sky, but the light of them felt oddly distant, as if filtered through a dream. The silence between the stones deepened—not absent of sound, but heavy with presence.

Tyler murmured something into her skin—soft, sleepy, maybe an inside joke or some half-formed thought from a forgotten dream. Cassie smiled but didn’t answer. She let her fingers graze the small of his back, half-lost in the haze of post-climax stillness.

Reading sample — continued

And then…

The breeze shifted.

Only slightly.

Only enough to unsettle a curl of hair from her face. Only enough to make the half-closed tent flap flutter like a heartbeat. But it carried something with it this time—something not of wind or desert or juniper trees.

Something alive.

Watching.

Waiting.

# # #

The change came gradually.

The fire outside, which had once popped and hissed against damp twigs, seemed to hold its breath. The warmth still hovered, but the air took on a strange density—neither colder nor hotter, but thick, like syrup over stone. A hush passed through the surrounding brush. No bird. No coyote. No click of cricket. Even the wind, once lazy and playful, seemed to curl inward, holding still.