



TANYA STOWE

SANTA FE
SUNRISE

Excerpt:

BRETT FRASER COULDN'T MOVE HIS NECK. He'd caught a few hours' sleep hunkered into the crevice between his car seat and the door. His right hand throbbed with tiny needles as the circulation came back, and his knee, wrapped around the gearshift, wouldn't unbend even after he sat up.

As soon as I get off this back road and locate Santa Fe, I'm going to find a nice hotel, a shower and a king-sized bed.

Sleeping in his car had definitely lost its charm. After six months of a self-imposed sabbatical touring the great Southwest, he was ready for some creature comforts.

One thing for sure, he'd seen some spectacular country. The Grand Canyon with its sheer drop-offs and hidden valleys. Lake Powell's amazing mixture of colors—blue, green and a thousand variations of rust. Canyon de Chelly, the Navajos' sacred place, with its smooth, sheer walls of swirling sandstone and cliff dwellings. Absolutely unbelievable.

He might not know where or how he fit into it, but one thing was clear, God had a plan. Anyone who'd witnessed these spectacular sights had to recognize the Master Artist at work.

Case in point: the sunrise in front of him.

In Arizona, fire burned the skies during sunrise and sunset. Bright golden light and fireballs of orange and gold lit the horizon. But here, in New Mexico, the colors were softer, more subtle. Above the dark ridge, the horizon was streaked as if by a paintbrush with bands of subtle gray blending into purple, then mauve, and finally pink.

Amazing.

Brett sat up straighter, peering closely.

A head appeared behind the ridge, coming over. When the runner reached the top, she turned and ran along the slender path with a smooth stride. A long ponytail swung behind her, giving her a graceful rhythm, almost like a

dancer swaying from side to side. Completely shadowed with the pastel sunrise behind, her curvy figure stood out in dark relief.

Brett shoved the fast-food bags off the seat beside him, searching for his phone. If he could just get a snap of her with both feet off the ground, the pastel horizon showing beneath her.

“Come on, come on.” The password lock took forever, and the camera even longer to open. At last he had the lens focused on the woman. He watched the mesmerizing rhythm of her movements, waiting for just the right moment.

Suddenly, the runner stumbled and disappeared from the lens. Brett lowered the phone just in time to see a dark running suit rolling down the sand-colored hill.