

Maid of the Mist and the Thunder Beings

As told by Corbett Sundown, 24 April 1981

The story that I'm about to tell you, it goes a long ways before the white man ever set foot on this continent, the story about the Thunder.

When I was a child the old people used to talk about all this old legend and history and whole lot of other things. So this thunder business we're going to be telling you about..... They used to say they lived under Niagara Falls. I've been in that tunnel where it is. I've been in it. When I was a teenager I was so curious, I couldn't wait until I was 18 years of age, my own boss, and I went over there to see. And so at least its' not going to be exact what I am going to be telling you. Because, I'll tell you the reason why. In Indian language, it makes specific things when you are talking. It means just that, you cannot go here or there. But English, using English there's five different ways you can use that one word. But with us, there's no such thing. But on a second thought too, that's pretty hard to translate some of these into English. So therefore it's going to be pretty difficult, but I wish that everybody else could understand the Indian language, it would be much better for me. But I guess this is the best way we can do it so that we can actually understand it.

So anyway, they used to say that the people used to talk to these people, the one living under the falls. And they would explain way in advance, what's coming, what's going to happen. They keep telling them, all these different cycles that's coming – they're going to see. And there isn't one cycle that they've missed. The Indians found out everything they've been told came true. Not once missed what they said. Even though they told it several years in advance, what's going to happen. So as I said.

There's that one old man sitting in the corner, he's smoking a pipe. He's the leader of this group. So in the spring of the year, when they go out in the spring of the year, because my mother used to do this too. When she first hear them, I don't care what time of the night or even the early part of the morning, she would get up and start a fire and then she would burn tobacco. So when this girl was over there she saw this, they would name the Indians who burnt tobacco for that old man, and they would actually have the tobacco in their hand. And they would name this Indian by his Indian name or Indian women by her name in Indian. And they could describe it, just exactly where all this came from. And so that's the way the story goes with us here. That's the way we understand it, but like I said while ago, they used to say too that they used to test the young braves by how much courage and how much bravery they have. They would come way up the rapids and they would put these young people in the canoe and let them go over the falls. And nobody ever drown or even got hurt. The canoe always come up whole, because from that height, birchbark canoe it would be all in splinters. So they kept doing it and they kept doing it, testing different braves, and so finally they told them to cut it out. "You don't need to do that. You never have to do that. When the Creator created you Indian people, the courage and the bravery came with you. So why test them, you already have it, it's up to you to use it when you need it." So they stopped from doing it.

This young girl in her teens, as I understand it, they used to like to do that in the summer months when it's really hot, sometimes, I used to do that when I was a kid, lay under a tree and go to sleep. And so when this girl went to sleep they saw this thing go in, under her dress. This young girl didn't know, but an old lady saw and never revealed what happened to that young girl, she never told

no one. I would think, as long as she saw it, she would have said something, but she didn't. She never said nothing, just kept it to herself. So like I said, the first time she found a boyfriend, and they got together – not too long, he died. And so it ran along, and little better than a year, she ran into another one. And then finally they got together again, and not too long she lost him too. Not knowing what's causing it either, the girl didn't know what's causing it. So she found the third one, and they got together. She lost him also. That's when it began to work in her head that she can't live like natural people, there must be something doing it.

So from her own mind, it kept working on her what she could do with herself or how she could go about asking people for their help. She was embarrassed to ask anybody for help too, and so she came to the conclusion one night, when they all went to bed, she went up the river, there was a canoe sitting there and so she jumped in that, and pushed the canoe into the rapids and jumped in. She lay in the canoe right flatly like this (motion) and it went down. So as it went over the falls, she put her arms against the side of the canoe so she wouldn't get thrown out. But she still had her hand up here and just simply braced herself as she went over the falls, but while it was flying, she noticed all of a sudden it had a little pullback somehow, but she didn't know what it was. So the boat just went down easily and just landed at the bottom of the falls. And then she heard someone talking. She didn't know who was down there at this time of the morning or night. She didn't even know who was there. She could feel touching, but she can't see them. So they told her, he's going to lead her by the hand, so she went along. I imagine that was kind of funny feeling when you can't see somebody holding your hand and start taking you someplace. So they went under the falls. She knew that they went under the falls.

When she got inside, there was a high ceiling and all these people sitting around. So then they start talking to her, they talked the same language so there was no problem as far as language was concerned. And so then they start telling who they were. They had come into being after they had got back inside the hollow place. While they were outside she couldn't see them, but once they got inside, they were natural like she was, but when they come to light, they disappear. She can't see them. But when they're inside like anybody else.

And so then the old man sitting over there, he asked the girl why she wanted to do this. "Why are you trying to kill yourself?" Then he started telling her, says "The Creator created you. The Creator created you. He gave you the soul and mind. And he gave you a number of days to walk around with Mother Nature. You were also given the privilege to bear children. But in the mean time something happened that you were not able to do so." And then he told her what has happened.

So then he ordered one of these others to go get medicine, he said medicine. So he went out; when he came back he had it and the old man told him to start a fire on the floor – small fire – not a big fire, more or less a smouldering, just the smoke.

So the old lady afterwards told what she saw and never said anything. And people didn't like that because she kept it a secret, whereby the young girl could have been helped earlier, she didn't have to resort to committing suicide if she'd have got help earlier. And so the old man spoke over here – he says "Now I want you to stand over the fire. Now, we're going to tell you DON'T RUN when you see what's on the floor. That's cause its not going to do no more harm." So he descried the little snake at the beginning, it was about this long (motion, about twelve inches). So when it landed on the floor there was this big good sized snake. So he told her "Now you can't go home – you're gonna have to stay with us for four years. You'll be among us for four years, so don't start hankering about going home because

they are not going to let you out there to see either. You are going to stay right in here with me” the old man said “With me.” Guhe-yah-dae, that means grandchild.

So when they go out and come back they always got a whole bunch of vegetables and food. And they would tell whose garden they got it from – who’s got good gardens – whose got poor gardens – the whole thing, you know. They would tell it back to the old man.

So then, as the story goes along, she stayed with them, like I said, four years. Never seen anybody else, just them. So that’s when they found out when they said they would have to move. The white eyes are pressing us. But like I said, they never made where they were going to go. They never told where they were going, they were just going to move....

When the girl, after four years, he told her that she can go back to her own family now. So he sent one of them out to contact somebody in the neighbourhood. He made the arrangement that she’s coming back. And then, he also warned the people what NOT to do. “Don’t harass her or razz her or anything, because she is like one of us. If she grabs you, she’s going to crush you.” So they kind of stayed far enough back, but they talked to her. Gets up in the morning, comes down, eat with the family. So she was on the tail end of her years. Her mother was up early. In them days I guess they used to pound corn four o’clock in the morning, so that they could have bread for breakfast. And that’s what she was doing, so when that girl came down the old lady put the pestle against the wall. She went to get something. So the young girl got up and grabbed it, she brought that thing down, then that whole thing split wide open – all the corn fell on the floor. Then it hit her what she was told not to do. Because that hasn’t rinsed off her because she lived with these people that long she became part of them.

So they contacted her and said, the old man says “You’re” going to have to do that four more years. Not touch anything. Not try to help any place, don’t get your hands on people. Just be one of the people, that’s all. We’ll explain it to them why, but that explanation they never revealed what was said to them. They never mentioned it. But it was explained to them.”

So, at the end of the four years, she finally made it, and then she started to go back to natural life like we are. And then finally she found another man and they had a nice family. Nothing happened to her anymore after that. They raised a nice family. So like I said that’s the legend when I was a little kid, told to me by my grandfather. He used to tell me a lot of things.....

Well, like I say, that woman raised a nice beautiful family, never nothing went wrong with her after that. But then that’s the last time too that the Thunder ever spoke to human being. He never said nothing no more to anybody. She was the last one.

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