

from Graymont, Barbara The Iroquois (NY: Chelsea House, 1988)

THE IROQUOIS STORY OF CREATION

Long before there were human beings, there were Sky People. They dwelled in the celestial world. In those days there was no sun. All light came from the large white blossoms on the celestial tree that stood in front of the Lodge of the Sky Chief. This Sky Chief had married a young wife. In time this wife, Sky Woman, began to show signs that she would soon bear a child.

There was a troublesome being, called Firedragon, in the Sky World. Firedragon was always spreading rumors. Now he whispered to Sky Chief that the child who was about to be born would not be his. In a fit of anger and jealousy, Sky Chief uprooted the great celestial tree in front of his lodge. He pushed his wife through the hole where the tree had once stood.

Sky Woman fell rapidly down toward the vast dark waters below. The birds, feeling sorry for her, flew underneath and gently supported her, breaking her fall and carrying her slowly downward. At the same time, the water animals hurried to make a place for her. Turtle said that he would support a world on his back. The sea animals plunged down into the water looking for some earth. Muskrat succeeded and came up with a large mouthful of earth, which he placed on Turtle's back. The light from the blossoms of the fallen celestial tree shone through the hole where it had stood and became the sun. When Sky Woman landed, everything was in readiness for her, with grass and trees beginning to grow.

Sky Woman gave birth to a daughter. When this daughter grew to womanhood, she began to be with child. No one knows whether her husband was Turtle or West Wind, but she gave birth to two remarkable twin boys—one good and one evil. The Good Twin was born in the usual way. But the Evil Twin was in a hurry and pushed through his mother's side to be born. In doing so, he killed his mother.

Sky Woman buried her daughter, and plants miraculously began to grow from various parts of the daughter's body—a tobacco plant, a cornstalk, a bean bush, and a squash vine. This was the origin of all the plants that would be most important to the human beings who would come later.

The Good Twin and the Evil Twin quickly grew to manhood. As soon as they were grown, they proved true to their names. The Good Twin began creating all sorts of good things: plants, animals, medicinal herbs, rivers, and streams. The Evil Twin began to spoil his brother's work, putting rapids and boulders in the rivers, creating poisonous plants, thorns and briars, diseases, and monsters. The Good and Evil Twins fought against each other to see who would predominate in creation, but the Evil could never overcome the Good. Finally the Good Twin created human beings to enjoy all the good things he had made for them. And that is how it all began.

in Alan Velic, ed.
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THE ORIGIN MYTH OF ACOMA

Myths of origin are common to all peoples. They attempt to answer the most nagging human questions: Where did we come from? Where did evil come from, and what caused it? And they answer lesser questions, such as how the elephant got its trunk, why the coyote slinks, and why man's penis is so short.

Indian origin myths differ substantially one from another, but most share certain characteristics. One universal feature is that a god (or gods) and spirits precede humans on earth. It should be noted here that most Indians were monotheistic in the sense that Christians and Jews are—that is, they believed in a single, all-powerful, uncreated God. The minor deities and spirits that appear in their legends are roughly analogous to the angels of the Old Testament: they are superhuman, immortal beings created by and subordinate to God.¹

Another common feature of the Indian origin myths is that the universe comprises several worlds, often arranged in vertically stacked layers. What exists on this earth is a poor copy of things existing in a better world above this one—a notion similar to Plato's cosmology. Finally, most myths take place in a bygone age in which animals talked and gods and culture heroes walked the earth.

The Acomas are a Pueblo tribe of Keresan linguistic stock. The village of Acoma, in western New Mexico, is purportedly the oldest inhabited settlement in the United States. The Acoma myth has several interesting features. For instance, the first human beings were two sisters, Nautsiti and Iatiku. The tutelary deity, Tsichtinako, is also female. All Keresan Pueblo myths begin with the birth of the two sisters, although in most other Indian origin myths, as in the mythologies of most other peoples, the first human being is male. Another interesting feature is the impregnation of Nautsiti, which seems to combine elements of virgin birth and original sin. Tempted by an evil spirit in the shape of a serpent, Nautsiti lies on her back and "receives" rain, which makes her pregnant. This incident is treated as sin in the Acoma account—the original sin, in fact—but it seems reminiscent not only of Jove's taking Danae in a shower of gold but also of Luke's account of the impregnation of Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."

¹Peter Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 140.

"The Origin Myth of Acoma" is reprinted from Matthew W. Stirling, *Origin Myth of Acoma and Other Records*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 135 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942).

Matthew W. Stirling obtained the myth in 1928 from a group of Acomas visiting Washington.

In the beginning two female human beings were born. These two children were born underground at a place called *Shipapu*. As they grew up, they began to be aware of each other. There was no light and they could only feel each other. Being in the dark they grew slowly.

After they had grown considerably, a Spirit whom they afterward called *Tsichtinako* spoke to them, and they found that it would give them nourishment. After they had grown large enough to think for themselves, they spoke to the Spirit when it had come to them one day and asked it to make itself known to them and to say whether it was male or female, but it replied only that it was not allowed to meet with them. They then asked why they were living in the dark without knowing each other by name, but the Spirit answered that they were *nuk'timi* (under the earth); but they were to be patient in waiting until everything was ready for them to go up into the light. So they waited a long time, and as they grew they learned their language from *Tsichtinako*.

When all was ready, they found a present from *Tsichtinako*, two baskets of seeds and little images of all the different animals [there were to be] in the world. The Spirit said they were sent by their father. They asked who was meant by their father, and *Tsichtinako* replied that his name was *Üch'tsiti*, and that he wished them to take their baskets out into the light, when the time came. *Tsichtinako* instructed them, "You will find the seeds of four kinds of pine trees, *lä'khok*, *gē'etsu* . . . , *wanūka*, and *lä'nye* in your baskets. You are to plant these seeds and will use the trees to get up into the light." They could not see the things in their baskets but feeling each object in turn they asked, "Is this it?," until the seeds were found. They then planted the seeds as *Tsichtinako* instructed. All of the four seeds sprouted, but in the darkness the trees grew very slowly, and the two sisters became very anxious to reach the light as they waited this long time. They slept for many years as they had no use for eyes. Each time they awoke they would feel the trees to see how they were growing. The tree *lanye* grew faster than the others and after a very long time pushed a hole through the earth for them and let in a very little light. The others stopped growing, at various heights, when this happened.

The hole that the tree *lanye* made was not large enough for them to pass through, so *Tsichtinako* advised them to look again in their baskets where they would find the image of an animal called *din-p* (badger) and tell it to become alive. They told it to live, and it did so as they spoke.

exclaiming, "A'uha! Why have you given me life?" They told it not to be afraid nor to worry about coming to life. "We have brought you to life because you are to be useful." Tsichtinako spoke to them again, instructing them to tell Badger to climb the pine tree, to bore a hole large enough for them to crawl up, cautioning him not to go out into the light, but to return when the hole was finished. Badger climbed the tree and, after he had dug a hole large enough, returned saying that he had done his work. They thanked him and said, "As a reward you will come up with us to the light and thereafter you will live happily. You will always know how to dig and your home will be in the ground where you will be neither too hot nor too cold."

Tsichtinako now spoke again, telling them to look in the basket for *Tāwāi'nū* (Locust), giving it life and asking it to smooth the hole by plastering. It, too, was to be cautioned to return. This they did and Locust smoothed the hole but, having finished, went out into the light. When it returned reporting that it had done its work, they asked it if it had gone out. Locust said no, and every time he was asked he replied no, until the fourth time when he admitted that he had gone out. They asked Locust what it was like outside. Locust replied that it was just *tsi'iti* (laid out flat). They said, "From now on you will be known as *Tsi-k'ā*. You will also come up with us, but you will be punished for disobedience by being allowed out only a short time. Your home will be in the ground and you will have to return when the weather is bad. You will soon die but you will be re-born each season."

The hole now let light into the place where the two sisters were, and Tsichtinako spoke to them, "Now is the time you are to go out. You are able to take your baskets with you. In them you will find pollen and sacred corn meal. When you reach the top, you will wait for the sun to come up and that direction will be called *ha'nami* (east). With the pollen and the sacred corn meal you will pray to the Sun. You will thank the Sun for bringing you to light, ask for a long life and happiness, and for success in the purpose for which you were created." Tsichtinako then taught them the prayers and the creation song, which they were to sing. This took a long while, but finally the sisters, followed by Badger and Locust, went out into the light, climbing the pine tree. Badger was very strong and skillful and helped them. On reaching the earth, they set down their baskets and saw for the first time what they had. The earth was soft and spongy under their feet as they walked, and they said, "This is not ripe." They stood waiting for the sun, not knowing where it would appear. Gradually it grew lighter and finally the sun came up. Before they began to pray, Tsichtinako told them they were facing east and that their right side, the side their best aim was on, would be known as *kū'ā'mē* (south)

and the left *ti dyami* (north) while behind at their backs was the direction *pūna'mē* (west) where the sun would go down. They had already learned while underground the direction *nūk'ūm'* (down) and later, when they asked where their father was, they were told *tyunami* (four skies above).

And as they waited to pray to the Sun, the girl on the right moved her best hand and was named *Iatiku*, which meant "bringing to life." Tsichtinako then told her to name her sister, but it took a long time. Finally Tsichtinako noticed that the other had more in her basket, so Tsichtinako told Iatiku to name her thus, and Iatiku called her *Nautsiti* which meant "more of everything in the basket."

They now prayed to the Sun as they had been taught by Tsichtinako, and sang the creation song. Their eyes hurt for they were not accustomed to the strong light. For the first time they asked Tsichtinako why they were on earth and why they were created. Tsichtinako replied, "I did not make you. Your father, Uchtsiti, made you, and it is he who has made the world, the sun which you have seen, the sky, and many other things which you will see. But Uchtsiti says the world is not yet completed, not yet satisfactory, as he wants it. This is the reason he has made you. You will rule and bring to life the rest of the things he has given you in the baskets." The sisters then asked how they themselves had come into being. Tsichtinako answered saying, "Uchtsiti first made the world. He threw a clot of his own blood into space and by his power it grew and grew until it became the earth. Then Uchtsiti planted you in this and by it you were nourished as you developed. Now that you have emerged from within the earth, you will have to provide nourishment for yourselves. I will instruct you in this." They then asked where their father lived and Tsichtinako replied, "You will never see your father, he lives four skies above, and has made you to live in this world. He has made you in the image of himself." So they asked why Tsichtinako did not become visible to them, but Tsichtinako replied, "I don't know how to live like a human being. I have been asked by Uchtsiti to look after you and to teach you. I will always guide you." And they asked again how they were to live, whether they could go down once more under the ground, for they were afraid of the winds and rains and their eyes were hurt by the light. Tsichtinako replied that Uchtsiti would take care of that and would furnish them means to keep warm and change the atmosphere so that they would get used to it.

At the end of the first day, when it became dark they were much frightened, for they had not understood that the sun would set and thought that Tsichtinako had betrayed them. "Tsichtinako! Tsichtinako! You told us we were to come into the light," they cried, "Why, then, is it dark?" So Tsichtinako explained, "This is the way it will always be. The sun will go

down and the next day come up anew in the east. When it is dark you are to rest and sleep as you slept when all was dark." So they were satisfied and slept. They rose to meet the sun, praying to it as they had been told, and were happy when it came up again, for they were warm and their faith in Tsichtinako was restored.

Tsichtinako next said to them, "Now that you have your names, you will pray with your names and your clan names so that the Sun will know you and recognize you." Tsichtinako asked Nautsiti which clan she wished to belong to. Nautsiti answered, "I wish to see the sun, that is the clan I will be." The spirit told Nautsiti to ask Iatiku what clan she wanted. Iatiku thought for a long time but finally she noticed that she had the seed from which sacred meal was made in her basket and no other kind of seeds. She thought, "With this name I shall be very proud, for it has been chosen for nourishment and it is sacred." So she said, "I will be Corn clan." They then waited for the sun to come up. When it appeared, Tsichtinako once more advised them to sing the first song and to pray, not forgetting their name and their clan name in starting their prayer. After the prayer they were to sing the second song.

When the sun appeared it was too bright for Iatiku and it hurt her eyes. She wondered if Nautsiti's eyes hurt her too, so she put her head down and sideways, letting her hair fall, and looked at Nautsiti. By doing this the light did not strike her squarely in the face and her hair cast a shade. Tsichtinako said, "Iatiku, the sun has not appeared for you. Look at Nautsiti, see how strongly the light is striking her. Notice how white she looks." And although Iatiku turned to the sun, it did not make her as white as Nautsiti, and Iatiku's mind was slowed up while Nautsiti's mind was made fast. But both of them remembered everything and did everything as they were taught.

When they had completed their prayers to the sun, Tsichtinako said, "You have done everything well and now you are both to take up your baskets and you must look to the north, west, south, and east, for you are now to pray to the Earth to accept the things in the basket and to give them life. First you must pray to the north, at the same time lift up your baskets in that direction. You will then do the same to the west, then to the south and east." They did as they were told and did it well. And Tsichtinako said to them, "From now on you will rule in every direction, north, west, south, and east."

They now questioned Tsichtinako again so that they would understand more clearly why they were given the baskets and their contents, and Tsichtinako replied, "Everything in the baskets is to be created by your word, for you are made in the image of Uchtsiti and your word will be as powerful as his word. He has created you to help him complete the world.

You are to plant the seeds of the different plants to be used when anything is needed. I shall always be ready to point out to you the various plants and animals."

The sisters did not realize that they were not taking food and did not understand when Tsichtinako told them they were to plant seeds to give them nourishment. But they were always ready to do as Tsichtinako asked, and she told them to plant first that which would maintain life, grains of corn. "When this plant grows," said Tsichtinako, "it will produce a part which I will point out to you. This will be taken as food." Everything in the basket was in pairs and the sisters planted two of each kind of corn.

The corn grew very slowly so Tsichtinako told them to plant *isthë* [the earliest plant to come up in the spring; gray with a small white flower; dies quickly] and to transmit its power of early ripening to the corn.

They were very interested in the corn and watched it every day as it grew. Tsichtinako showed them where the pollen came out. "That you will call *kū'äch'timu*," she said, "there the pollen will appear. When the pollen is plentiful, you will gather it, and with it and corn meal you will pray to the rising sun each morning." This they did always, but Nautsiti was sometimes a little lazy.

After some time the corn ripened. Tsichtinako told them to look at it and to gather some. They saw that the corn was hard and they picked four ears. Iatiku took two ears carefully without hurting the plant; but Nautsiti jerked hers off roughly. Iatiku noticed this and cautioned her sister not to ruin the plants. They took the ears of corn to Tsichtinako saying, "We have brought the corn, it is ripe." Tsichtinako agreed and explained that the corn ears when cooked would be their food. They did not understand this and asked what they would cook with. Tsichtinako then told them that Uchtsiti would give them fire. That night as they sat around they saw a red light drop from the sky. After they had seen it, Tsichtinako told them it was fire, and that they were to go over and get some of it. They asked with what, and she told them to get it with a flat rock because it was very hot and they could not take it in their hands. After getting it with a rock, they asked what they were to do with it, and were told they were to make a fire, to go to the pine tree they had planted, to break off some of the branches and put them in the fire. They went to the tree and broke some of the twigs from it. When they got back to the fire, they were told to throw the twigs down. They did so and a large pile of wood appeared there. Tsichtinako told them this wood would last many years till there was time for trees to grow, and showed them how to build a fire. She told them that with the flames from the fire they would keep warm and would cook their food.

hungry by now. But why waste time talking about it? I will let them have something to eat immediately.' He was quite near a knoll, so he took his club, struck it and in this manner killed a large old bear. Then he hurriedly built a fire and singed the hair off the bear. The body he cut up and boiled. As soon as it had begun to boil a little, he dished the meat out, cooled it and when it was cool opened the bladder and said, 'My dear little children, I miss them a great deal!' Then he uncovered them and fed them. He filled the wooden bowl high and gave it to them. In spite of all that the man had told him he did many things strictly forbidden to him. After he had done all these prohibited things, he put the children back in the bladder and attached it dangling to his belt.

He had been gathering together pieces of broken wood as he walked along and now he was ready to sit down for his meal. He ate up everything that remained and drank all the soup that was in the pail. Then he proceeded on his journey. All the animals in the world mocked him and called out, 'Trickster!'

After a little while he himself got hungry. 'The little children were to eat once a month I was told,' he thought to himself. But now he himself was hungry. So again he said, 'My, my! It is about time for my dear little children to be hungry again. I must get something for them to eat.' He immediately searched for a knoll, struck it and killed a bear of enormous size. He then built a fire, singed the hairs off the bear; cut it up and put it on to boil. As soon as it was boiled he dished it out and cooled it quickly. When it was cooled off he took the bladder attached to his belt and opened it. To his surprise the children were dead. 'The dear little children! How unfortunate that they have died!'

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Just as he said this the father of the children appeared and said, 'Well, Trickster, you will die for this! I will kill you, as I said I would if you killed my children.' As he approached him, Trickster exclaimed appealingly, 'O my younger brother!' However the man rushed at him so menacingly that Trickster drew back at once and fled from him. He ran with all his speed with the other behind him throwing objects at him which barely missed him. There seemed to be no escape. Only by making sudden and unexpected turns did Trickster escape being struck.

Thus did the man pursue Trickster. In desperation he thought of seeking refuge up in the sky or under the ground, yet he felt that there, too, he would be followed. 'Trickster, nowhere, no matter where you flee, will you be able to save your life,' shouted the man. 'No matter where you go,

I will pursue and kill you. So you might as well give up now and be done with it. You are exhausted already as you see. You have nowhere to go. Indeed, you will not be able to find a refuge-place anywhere.' Thus spoke the man.

He pursued Trickster everywhere. It was only by adroit dodging that he escaped being hit by objects thrown at him. Then, suddenly, Trickster got frightened. By this time he had run over the whole earth and he was now approaching the place where the sun rises, the end of the world. Toward a pointed piece of land that projected in the form of a steep wall of rock into the ocean, toward this he ran. It was the edge of the ocean. He pressed up against it and finally jumped into the water. Right into the middle of the ocean he fell. 'Ah, Trickster, you have saved yourself! You were indeed destined to die!' Then the man gave up the pursuit. Trickster uttered an exclamation of heartfelt relief and said to himself, 'That such a thing should happen to Trickster, the warrior, I never imagined! Why, I almost came to grief! . . .

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As he was walking along suddenly he came to a lake, and there in the lake he saw numerous ducks. Immediately he ran back quietly before they could see him and sought out a spot where there was a swamp. From it he gathered a large quantity of reed-grass and made himself a big pack. This he put on his back and carried it to the lake. He walked along the shore of the lake carrying it ostentatiously. Soon the ducks saw him and said, 'Look, that is Trickster walking over there. I wonder what he is doing? Let us call and ask him.' So they called to him, 'Trickster, what are you carrying?' Thus they shouted at him, but he did not answer. Then, again they called to him. But it was only after the fourth call that he replied and said, 'Well, are you calling me?' 'What are you carrying on your back?' they asked. 'My younger brothers, surely you do not know what it is you are asking. What am I carrying? Why, I am carrying songs. My stomach is full of bad songs. Some of these my stomach could not hold and that is why I am carrying them on my back. It is a long time since I sang any of them. Just now there are a large number in me. I have met no people on my journey who would dance for me and let me sing some for them. And I have, in consequence, not sung any for a long time.' Then the ducks spoke to each other and said, 'Come, what if we ask him to sing? Then we could dance, couldn't we?' So one of them called out, 'Well, let it be so. I enjoy dancing very much and it has been a very long time since I last danced.'

So they spoke to Trickster, 'Older brother, yes, if you will sing to us we

will dance. We have been yearning to dance for some time but could not do so because we had no songs.' Thus spoke the ducks. 'My younger brothers,' replied Trickster, 'you have spoken well and you shall have your desire granted. First, however, I will erect a dancing-lodge.' In this they helped him and soon they had put up a dancing-lodge, a grass-lodge. Then they made a drum. When this was finished he invited them all to come in and they did so. When he was ready to sing he said, 'My younger brothers, this is the way in which you must act. When I sing, when I have people dance for me, the dancers must, from the very beginning, never open their eyes.' 'Good,' they answered. Then when he began to sing he said, 'Now remember, younger brothers, you are not to open your eyes. If you do they will become red.' So, as soon as he began to sing, the ducks closed their eyes and danced.

After a while one of the ducks was heard to flap his wings as he came back to the entrance of the lodge, and cry, 'Quack!' Again and again this happened. Sometimes it sounded as if the particular duck had somehow tightened its throat. Whenever any of the ducks cried out then Trickster would tell the other ducks to dance faster and faster. Finally a duck whose name was Little-Red-Eyed-Duck secretly opened its eyes, just the least little bit it opened them. To its surprise, Trickster was wringing the necks of his fellow ducks! He would also bite them as he twisted their necks. It was while he was doing this that the noise which sounded like the tightening of the throat was heard. In this fashion Trickster killed as many as he could reach.

Little-Red-Eyed-Duck shouted. 'Alas! He is killing us! Let those who can save themselves.' He himself flew out quickly through the opening above. All the others likewise crowded toward this opening. They struck Trickster with their wings and scratched him with their feet. He went among them with his eyes closed and stuck out his hands to grab them. He grabbed one in each hand and choked them to death. His eyes were closed tightly. Then suddenly all of them escaped except the two he had in his grasp.

When he looked at these, to his annoyance, he was holding in each hand a scabby-mouthed duck. In no way perturbed, however, he shouted, 'Ha, ha, this is the way a man acts! Indeed these ducks will make fine soup to drink!' Then he made a fire and cut some sharp-pointed sticks with which to roast them. Some he roasted in this manner, while others he roasted by covering them with ashes. 'I will wait for them to be cooked,' he said to himself. 'I had, however, better go to sleep now. By the time I awake they will unquestionably be thoroughly done. Now, you, my younger brother, must keep watch for me while I go to sleep. If you notice any people,

drive them off.' He was talking to his anus. Then, turning his anus toward the fire, he went to sleep.

13

When he was sleeping some small foxes approached and, as they ran along, they scented something that seemed like fire. 'Well, there must be something around here,' they said. So they turned their noses toward the wind and looked and, after a while, truly enough, they saw the smoke of a fire. So they peered around carefully and soon noticed many sharp-pointed sticks arranged around a fire with meat on them. Stealthily they approached nearer and nearer and, scrutinizing everything carefully, they noticed someone asleep there. 'It is Trickster and he is asleep! Let us eat this meat. But we must be very careful not to wake him up. Come, let us eat,' they said to one another. When they came close, much to their surprise, however, gas was expelled from somewhere. 'Pooh!' such was the sound made. 'Be careful! He must be awake.' So they ran back. After a while one of them said, 'Well, I guess he is asleep now. That was only a bluff. He is always up to some tricks.' So again they approached the fire. Again gas was expelled and again they ran back. Three times this happened. When they approached the fourth time gas was again expelled. However, they did not run away. So Trickster's anus, in rapid succession, began to expel more and more gas. Still they did not run away. Once, twice, three times, it expelled gas in rapid succession. 'Pooh! Pooh!' Such was the sound it made. Yet they did not run away. Then louder, still louder, was the sound of the gas expelled. 'Pooh! Pooh! Pooh!' Yet they did not run away. On the contrary, they now began to eat the roasted pieces of duck. As they were eating, the Trickster's anus continued its 'Pooh' incessantly. There the foxes stayed until they had eaten up all the pieces of duck roasted on sticks. Then they came to those pieces that were being roasted under ashes and, in spite of the fact that the anus was expelling gas, 'Pooh! Pooh! Pooh! Pooh!' continuously, they ate these all up too. Then they replaced the pieces with the meat eaten off, nicely under the ashes. Only after that did they go away.

After a while Trickster awoke, 'My, O my!' he exclaimed joyfully, 'the things I had put on to roast must be cooked crisp by now.' So he went over, felt around, and pulled out a leg. To his dismay it was but a bare bone, completely devoid of meat. 'How terrible! But this is the way they generally are when they are cooked too much!' So he felt around again and pulled out another one. But this leg also had nothing on it, 'How terrible! These, likewise, must have been roasted too much! However, I told my

younger brother, anus, to watch the meat roasting. He is a good cook indeed! He pulled out one piece after the other. They were all the same. Finally he sat up and looked around. To his astonishment, the pieces of meat on the roasting sticks were gone! 'Ah, ha, now I understand! It must have been those covetous friends of mine who have done me this injury!' he exclaimed. Then he poked around the fire again and again but found only bones. 'Alas! Alas! They have caused my appetite to be disappointed, those covetous fellows! And you, too, you despicable object, what about your behaviour? Did I not tell you to watch this fire? You shall remember this! As a punishment for your remissness, I will burn your mouth so that you will not be able to use it!'

Thereupon he took a burning piece of wood and burnt the mouth of his anus. He was, of course, burning himself and, as he applied the fire, he exclaimed, 'Ouch! Ouch! This is too much! I have made my skin smart. Is it not for such things that they call me Trickster? They have indeed talked me into doing this just as if I had been doing something wrong!'

Trickster had burnt his anus. He had applied a burning piece of wood to it. Then he went away.

As he walked along the road he felt certain that someone must have passed along it before for he was on what appeared to be a trail. Indeed, suddenly, he came upon a piece of fat that must have come from someone's body. 'Someone has been packing an animal he had killed,' he thought to himself. Then he picked up a piece of fat and ate it. It had a delicious taste. 'My, my, how delicious it is to eat this!' As he proceeded however, much to his surprise, he discovered that it was a part of himself, part of his own intestines, that he was eating. After burning his anus, his intestines had contracted and fallen off, piece by piece, and these pieces were the things he was picking up. 'My, my! Correctly, indeed, am I named Foolish One, Trickster! By their calling me thus, they have at last actually turned me into a Foolish One, a Trickster!' Then he tied his intestines together. A large part, however, had been lost. In tying it, he pulled it together so that wrinkles and ridges were formed. That is the reason why the anus of human beings has its present shape.

15

On Trickster proceeded. As he walked along, he came to a lovely piece of land. There he sat down and soon fell asleep. After a while he woke up and found himself lying on his back without a blanket. He looked up above him and saw to his astonishment something floating there. 'Aha, aha! The chiefs have unfurled their banner! The people must be having a

great feast for this is always the case when the chief's banner is unfurled.' With this he sat up and then first realized that his blanket was gone. It was his blanket he saw floating above. His penis had become stiff and the blanket had been forced up. 'That's always happening to me,' he said. 'My younger brother, you will lose the blanket, so bring it back.' Thus he spoke to his penis. Then he took hold of it and, as he handled it, it got softer and the blanket finally fell down. Then he coiled up his penis and put it in a box. And only when he came to the end of his penis did he find his blanket. The box with the penis he carried on his back.

16

After that he walked down a slope and finally came to a lake. On the opposite side he saw a number of women swimming, the chief's daughter and her friends. 'Now,' exclaimed Trickster, 'is the opportune time: now I am going to have intercourse.' Thereupon he took his penis out of the box and addressed it, 'My younger brother, you are going after the chief's daughter. Pass her friends, but see that you lodge squarely in her, the chief's daughter.' Thus speaking he dispatched it. It went sliding on the surface of the water. 'Younger brother, come back, come back! You will scare them away if you approach in that manner!' So he pulled the penis back, tied a stone around its neck, and sent it out again. This time it dropped to the bottom of the lake. Again he pulled it back, took another stone, smaller in size, and attached it to its neck. Soon he sent it forth again. It slid along the water, creating waves as it passed along. 'Brother, come back, come back! You will drive the women away if you create waves like that!' So he tried a fourth time. This time he got a stone, just the right size and just the right weight, and attached it to its neck. When he dispatched it, this time it went directly towards the designated place. It passed and just barely touched the friends of the chief's daughter. They saw it and cried out, 'Come out of the water, quick!' The chief's daughter was the last one on the bank and could not get away, so the penis lodged squarely in her. Her friends came back and tried to pull it out, but all to no avail. They could do absolutely nothing. Then the men who had the reputation for being strong were called and tried it but they, too, could not move it. Finally they all gave up. Then one of them said, 'There is an old woman around here who knows many things. Let us go and get her.' So they went and got her and brought her to the place where this was happening. When she came there she recognized immediately what was taking place. 'Why, this is First-born, Trickster. The chief's daughter is having intercourse and you are all just annoying her.' Thereupon she went

out, got an awl and straddling the penis, worked the awl into it a number of times, singing as she did so:

'First-born, if it is you, pull it out! Pull it out!'

Thus she sang. Suddenly in the midst of her singing, the penis was jerked out and the old woman was thrown a great distance. As she stood there bewildered, Trickster, from across the lake, laughed loudly at her. 'That old naughty woman! Why is she doing this when I am trying to have intercourse? Now, she has spoiled all the pleasure.' . . .

19

As he continued his aimless wandering unexpectedly, much to his surprise, he met a little fox. 'Well, my younger brother, here you are! You are travelling, aren't you?' 'Yes, yes, here I am!' answered the little fox. 'The world is going to be a difficult place to live in and I am trying to find some clean place in which to dwell. That is what I am looking for.' 'Oh, oh, my younger brother, what you have said is very true. I, too, was thinking of the very same thing. I have always wanted to have a companion, so let us live together.' Trickster consented, and so they went on to look for a place in which to dwell.

As they ran along they encountered a jay. 'Well, well, my younger brother, what are you doing?' asked Trickster. 'Older brother, I am looking for a place to live in because the world is soon going to be a difficult place in which to dwell.'

'We are looking for the very same thing. When I heard my younger brother speaking of this I envied him very much. So let us live together, for we also are hunting for such a place.' Thus spoke Trickster.

Then they went on together and soon they came across a *hetcgeniga* (nit). 'Well, well, my younger brother, what are you doing?' they asked. 'Older brothers, I am looking for a pleasant place to live in,' the bird answered. 'Younger brother, we are travelling about looking for the same thing. When I heard these others saying that they wanted to live together as companions I liked it. Let us, therefore, live together,' said Trickster.

They were all agreed and soon they came to a place where the river forked and where there was a lovely piece of land with red oaks growing upon it. It was indeed a beautiful place. This, they agreed, was a delightful place to live in, and so they stopped there and built themselves a lodge.

In the fall, when everything was ripe, they had, of course, all they

wanted to eat. However, winter soon approached and not long after it began, a deep snow fell. The situation of the four now became indeed very difficult. They had nothing to eat and they were getting quite hungry. Then Trickster spoke, 'Younger brothers, it is going to be very difficult. However, if we do the thing I am about to suggest, it will be good. So, at least, I think.' 'All right, if it is indeed something good that our older brother means we certainly will do it, for otherwise some of us will starve to death. What is it that we should do that is good and by which we can get something to eat?' 'Listen. There is a village yonder, where they are enjoying great blessings. The chief has a son who is killing many animals. He is not married yet but is thinking of it. Let us go over there. I will disguise myself as a woman and marry him. Thus we can live in peace until spring comes.' 'Good!' they ejaculated. All were willing and delighted to participate.

20

Trickster now took an elk's liver and made a vulva from it. Then he took some elk's kidneys and made breasts from them. Finally he put on a woman's dress. In this dress his friends enclosed him very firmly. The dresses he was using were those that the women who had taken him for a racoon had given him. He now stood there transformed into a very pretty woman indeed. Then he let the fox have intercourse with him and make him pregnant, then the jaybird and, finally, the nit. After that he proceeded toward the village.

Now, at the end of the village, lived an old woman and she immediately addressed him, saying, 'My granddaughter, what is your purpose in travelling around like this? Certainly it is with some object in view that you are travelling!' Then the old woman went outside and shouted, 'Ho! Ho! There is someone here who has come to court the chief's son.' This, at least, is what the old woman seemed to be saying. Then the chief said to his daughters, 'Ho! This clearly is what this woman wants and is the reason for her coming; so, my daughters, go and bring your sister-in-law here.' Then they went after her. She certainly was a very handsome woman. The chief's son liked her very much. Immediately they prepared dried corn for her and they boiled slit bear-ribs. That was why Trickster was getting married, of course. When this food was ready they put it in a dish, cooled it, and placed it in front of Trickster. He devoured it at once. There she (Trickster) remained.

Not long after Trickster became pregnant. The chief's son was very happy about the fact that he was to become a father. Not long after that

Trickster gave birth to a boy. Then again he became pregnant and gave birth to another boy. Finally for the third time he became pregnant and gave birth to a third boy.

21

The last child cried as soon as it was born and nothing could stop it. The crying became very serious and so it was decided to send for an old woman who had the reputation for being able to pacify children. She came, but she, likewise, could not pacify him. Finally the little child cried out and sang:

'If I only could play with a little piece of white cloud!'

They went in search of a shaman, for it was the chief's son who was asking for this and, consequently, no matter what the cost, it had to be obtained. He had asked for a piece of white cloud, and a piece of white cloud, accordingly, they tried to obtain. But how could they obtain a piece of white cloud? All tried very hard and, finally, they made it snow. Then, when the snow was quite deep, they gave him a piece of snow to play with and he stopped crying.

After a while he again cried out and sang:

'If I could only play with a piece of blue sky!'

Then they tried to obtain a piece of blue sky for him. Very hard they tried, but were not able to obtain any. In the spring of the year, however, they gave him a piece of blue grass and he stopped crying.

After a while he began to cry again. This time he asked for some blue (green) leaves. Then the fourth time he asked for some roasting ears. They gave him green leaves and roasting ears of corn and he stopped crying.

One day later, as they were steaming corn, the chief's wife teased her sister-in-law. She chased her around the pit where they were steaming corn. Finally, the chief's son's wife (Trickster) jumped over the pit and she dropped something very rotten. The people shouted at her, 'It is Trickster!' The men were all ashamed, especially the chief's son. The animals who had been with Trickster, the fox, the jaybird and the nit, all of them now ran away.

22

Trickster also ran away. Suddenly he said to himself, 'Well, why am I doing all this? It is about time that I went back to the woman to whom

I am really married. Kunu must be a pretty big boy by this time.' Thus spoke Trickster. Then he went across the lake to the woman to whom he was really married. When he got here he found, much to his surprise, that the boy that had been born to him was indeed quite grown up. The chief was very happy when Trickster came home. 'My son-in-law has come home,' he ejaculated. He was very happy indeed. Trickster hunted game for his child and killed very many animals. There he stayed a long time until his child had become a grown-up man. Then, when he saw that his child was able to take care of himself, he said, 'Well, it is about time for me to start travelling again for my boy is quite grown up now. I will go around the earth and visit people for I am tired of staying here. I used to wander around the world in peace. Here I am just giving myself a lot of trouble.'

23

As he went wandering around aimlessly he suddenly heard someone speaking. He listened very carefully and it seemed to say, 'He who chews me will defecate; he will defecate!' That was what it was saying. 'Well, why is this person talking in this manner?' said Trickster. So he walked in the direction from which he had heard the speaking and again he heard, quite near him, someone saying: 'He who chews me, he will defecate; he will defecate!' This is what was said. 'Well, why does this person talk in such fashion?' said Trickster. Then he walked to the other side. So he continued walking along. Then right at his very side, a voice seemed to say, 'He who chews me, he will defecate; he will defecate!' 'Well, I wonder who it is who is speaking. I know very well that if I chew it, I will not defecate.' But he kept looking around for the speaker and finally discovered, much to his astonishment, that it was a bulb on a bush. The bulb it was that was speaking. So he seized it, put it in his mouth, chewed it, and then swallowed it. He did just this and then went on.

'Well, where is the bulb gone that talked so much? Why, indeed, should I defecate? When I feel like defecating, then I shall defecate, no sooner. How could such an object make me defecate!' Thus spoke Trickster. Even as he spoke, however, he began to break wind. 'Well this, I suppose, is what it meant. Yet the bulb said I would defecate, and I am merely expelling gas. In any case I am a great man even if I do expel a little gas!' Thus he spoke. As he was talking he again broke wind. This time it was really quite strong. 'Well, what a foolish one I am. This is why I am called Foolish One, Trickster.' Now he began to break wind again and again. 'So this is why the bulb spoke as it did, I suppose.' Once more he broke wind. This time it was very loud and his rectum began to smart.

'Well, it surely is a great thing!' Then he broke wind again, this time with so much force, that he was propelled forward. 'Well, well, it may even make me give another push, but it won't make me defecate,' so he exclaimed defiantly. The next time he broke wind, the hind part of his body was raised up by the force of the explosion and he landed on his knees and hands. 'Well, go ahead and do it again! Go ahead and do it again!' Then, again, he broke wind. This time the force of the expulsion sent him far up in the air and he landed on the ground, on his stomach. The next time he broke wind, he had to hang on to a log, so high was he thrown. However, he raised himself up and, after a while, landed on the ground, the log on top of him. He was almost killed by the fall. The next time he broke wind, he had to hold on to a tree that stood near by. It was a poplar and he held on with all his might yet, nevertheless, even then, his feet flopped up in the air. Again, and for the second time, he held on to it when he broke wind and yet he pulled the tree up by the roots. To protect himself, the next time, he went on until he came to a large tree, a large oak tree. Around this he put both his arms. Yet, when he broke wind, he was swung up and his toes struck against the tree. However, he held on.

After that he ran to a place where people were living. When he got there, he shouted, 'Say, hurry up and take your lodge down, for a big war-party is upon you and you will surely be killed! Come let us get away!' He scared them all so much that they quickly took down their lodge, piled it on Trickster, and then got on him themselves. They likewise placed all the little dogs they had on top of Trickster. Just then he began to break wind again and the force of the expulsion scattered the things on top of him in all directions. They fell far apart from one another. Separated, the people were standing about and shouting to one another; and the dogs, scattered here and there, howled at one another. There stood Trickster laughing at them till he ached.

Now he proceeded onward. He seemed to have gotten over his troubles. 'Well, this bulb did a lot of talking,' he said to himself, 'yet it could not make me defecate.' But even as he spoke he began to have the desire to defecate, just a very little. 'Well, I suppose this is what it meant. It certainly bragged a good deal, however.' As he spoke he defecated again. 'Well, what a braggart it was! I suppose this is why it said this.' As he spoke these last words, he began to defecate a good deal. After a while, as he was sitting down, his body would touch the excrement. Thereupon he got on top of a log and sat down there but, even then, he touched the excrement. Finally, he climbed up a log that was leaning against a tree. However, his body still touched the excrement, so he went up higher. Even then, however, he touched it so he climbed still higher up. Higher

and higher he had to go. Nor was he able to stop defecating. Now he was on top of the tree. It was small and quite uncomfortable. Moreover, the excrement began to come up to him.

24

Even on the limb on which he was sitting he began to defecate. So he tried a different position. Since the limb, however, was very slippery he fell right down into the excrement. Down he fell, down into the dung. In fact he disappeared in it, and it was only with very great difficulty that he was able to get out of it. His racoon-skin blanket was covered with filth, and he came out dragging it after him. The pack he was carrying on his back was covered with dung, as was also the box containing his penis. The box he emptied and then placed it on his back again.

25

Then, still blinded by the filth, he started to run. He could not see anything. As he ran he knocked against a tree. The old man cried out in pain. He reached out and felt the tree and sang:

'Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!'

And the tree answered, 'What kind of a tree do you think I am? I am an oak tree. I am the forked oak tree that used to stand in the middle of the valley. I am that one,' it said. 'Oh, my, is it possible that there might be some water around here?' Trickster asked. The tree answered, 'Go straight on.' This is what it told him. As he went along he bumped up against another tree. He was knocked backwards by the collision. Again he sang:

'Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!'

'What kind of a tree do you think I am? The red oak tree that used to stand at the edge of the valley, I am that one.' 'Oh, my, is it possible that there is water around here?' asked Trickster. Then the tree answered and said, 'Keep straight on,' and so he went again. Soon he knocked against another tree. He spoke to the tree and sang:

'Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!'

'What kind of a tree do you think I am? The slippery elm tree that used to stand in the midst of the others, I am that one.' Then Trickster asked, 'Oh, my, is it possible that there would be some water near here?' And the tree answered and said, 'Keep right on.' On he went and soon he bumped into another tree and he touched it and sang:

'Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!'

'What kind of a tree do you think I am? I am the basswood tree that

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ed. Elizabeth Tooker - Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1977

A Winnebago Shaman's Curing Ritual¹⁰⁰

Here is the tobacco, Fire. You promised me that if I offered you tobacco you would grant me whatever request I made. Now I am placing tobacco on your head as you told me to, when I fasted for four days and you blessed me. I am sending you the plea of a human being who is ill. He wishes to live. This tobacco is for you and I pray that the one who is ill be restored to health within four days.

To you too, Buffalo, I offer tobacco. A person who is ill is offering tobacco to you and asking you to restore him to health. So add that power which I obtained from you at the time I fasted for six days and you sent your spirits after me who took me to your lodge, which lies in the center of this earth and which is absolutely white. There you blessed me, you Buffaloes, of four different colors. Those blessings that you bestowed upon me then, I ask of you now. The power of breathing with which you blessed me, I am in need of now. Add your power to mine, as you promised. The people have given me plenty of tobacco for you.

To you, Grizzly Bear, I also offered tobacco. At a place called Pointed Hill lives a spirit who is in charge of ceremonial lodge and to this all the other grizzly bears belong. You all blessed me and you said that I would be able to kill whomsoever I wished, and that at the same time I would be able to restore any person to life. Now, I have a chance to enable a person to live and I wish to aid him. So here is some tobacco for you. You took my spirit to your home after I had fasted for ten days and you blessed me there. The powers with which you blessed me there I ask of you now. Here is some tobacco, Grandfathers, that the people are offering to you.

To you, the Chief of the Eels, you who live in the center of the ocean, I offer tobacco. You blessed me after I had fasted for eight days. With your power of breathing and with your inexhaustible supply of water, you blessed me. You told me that I could use my blessing whenever I tried to cure a patient. You

100. Radin, *Winnebago Tribe*, pp. 273-275.

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told me that I could use all the water in the ocean, and you blessed me with all the things that are in the water. A person has come to me and asked me for life; and as I wish him to live, I am addressing you. When I spit upon the patient may the power of my saliva be the same as yours. Therefore I offer you tobacco; here it is.

To you, the Turtle, you who are in charge of a shaman lodge, you who blessed me after I had fasted seven days and carried my spirit to your home, where I found many birds of prey. There you blessed me and you told me that should, at any time, any human being have a pain I would be able to drive it out of him. For that reason you called me One-Who-Drives-Out-Pains. Now before me is a person with a bad pain and I wish to take it out of him. That is what the spirits told me when they blessed me, before I came down to earth. Therefore I am going to heal him. Here is the tobacco.

To you, who are in charge of the snake lodge, you who are perfectly white, Rattlesnake, I pray. You blessed me with your rattles to wrap around my gourd and you told me after I had fasted for four days that you could help me. You said that I would never fail in anything that I attempted. So now, when I offer you tobacco and shake my gourd, may my patient live and may life¹⁰¹ be opened to him. That is what you promised me, Grandfather.

I greet you, too, Night Spirits. You blessed me after I had fasted for nine days, and you took my spirit to your village, which lies in the east, where you gave me your flutes, which you told me were holy. You made my flute holy likewise. For these I ask you now, for you know that I am speaking the truth. A sick person has come to me and has asked me to cure him; and because I want him to live I am speaking to you. You promised to accept my tobacco at all times; here it is.

To you, Disease-Giver, I offer tobacco. After I had fasted two days you let me know that you were the one who gives diseases and that if I desired to heal anyone it would be easy for me to do so were I blessed by you. So, Disease-Giver, I am

101. I.e., an additional number of years.

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offering you tobacco, and I ask that this sick person who has come to me be restored to health again as you promised when you bestowed your blessing upon me.

To you, Thunderbirds, I offer tobacco too. When you blessed me you said that you would help me whenever I needed you. A person has come to me and asked me to cure him, and as I want him to live, I wish to remind you of your promise. Grandfathers, here is some tobacco.

To you, the Sun, I offer tobacco too; here it is. You blessed me after I had fasted for five days and you told me that you would come to my aid whenever I had something difficult to do. Now, someone has come to me and pleaded for life, and he has brought good offerings of tobacco to me because he knows that you have blessed me.

To you, grandmother, the Moon, I also offer tobacco. You blessed me and said that whenever I needed your power you would aid me. A person has come to me and asked for life, and I therefore call upon you to help me with your power as you promised. Grandmother, here is some tobacco.

To you, grandmother, the Earth, I too offer tobacco. You blessed me and promised to help me whenever I needed you. You said that I could use all the best herbs that grow upon you, and that I would always be able to effect cures with them. Those herbs I ask of you now, and I ask you to help me cure this sick person. Make my medicine powerful, grandmother.

To you, Chief of the Spirits, I offer tobacco. You who blessed me and said that you would help me. I offer you tobacco and ask you to let this sick person live, and if his spirit is about to depart, I ask you to prevent it.

I offer tobacco to all of you who have blessed me.

* * *

As has been noted, such a tobacco invocation is not limited to those beings who have appeared in a vision or dream, but is part of the more general custom of a number of these peoples. This is illustrated in the following four Menominee texts.

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Menominee Tobacco Offerings to Medicinal Herbs¹⁰²

Now this earth is the grandmother of us all; and it is from her that these roots spring forth that this Indian is to use. This is the way the Indian curer does: He goes and digs up roots and herbs. And this: He first makes an offering of tobacco to them; he sings to them as he picks them, that they may act effectively when he uses them in doctoring. His prayer is heard; he cures those whom he treats. Thus did the great fathers above prepare and plan it. And in all truth it did work with success when this Indian made correct use of it.

Menominee Tobacco Offering to the Thunderbirds¹⁰³

The way the Indian is given to making offerings of tobacco: Whenever the Thunderers are approaching with noise, he makes an offering to them, pleasing them with a gift of tobacco, and begging them to pass by in peace. And this is what the sacrificer does: He goes out of doors and lays down his tobacco; and sometimes he places it on the fire. When he makes the offering, then this is the way he sometimes chants, that they may take pity on him, even as they have in the past taken pity on him and blessed him, that things may go well with him: "Now, I make you an offering of tobacco, my grandfathers. With gentleness go by, my grandfathers!"

A Longer Menominee Speech to the Thunderbirds¹⁰⁴

You Thunderers are our eldest brothers! Now we have asked you to come with your rain to water our gardens, freshen

102. Bloomfield, *Menomini Texts*, p. 9.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

104. Alanson Skinner, *Associations and Ceremonies of the Menomini Indians*, *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 13, no. 2 (1915) p. 207.

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our lives, and ward off disease. We beg you not to bring with you your terrible hail and wind. You have four degrees of tempest, come with a moderate rain and not a deluge. Do not bring too much lightning. Grant this, that we may be happy till the next time of offering. This tobacco we offer you, you can see it before us. It is all for you.

A Menominee Account of a Tobacco Offering to the Spring Being¹⁰⁵

Now, once in my life this is what happened to me; I shall tell the story; I shall tell it to my friend here, that on this day he may know it. That is the reason I am going to tell it.

I was twenty years old at the time; I was married. I had a wife. At that time when I was twenty years old, I had one child; it was a girl.

Now at one time I had gone off to hunt; I had my gun with me. To some place, perhaps thirty miles it was that I had gone on my hunt. I had not taken along anything to eat. As I walked about, off there on my hunt, at noon somewhere by the road I saw some water. It was a hillside; halfway down the slope was where I saw the water. There from the hillside the water was welling forth. It was a little brook; its water came from the high ground there. There I seated myself and watched the water come forth.

Now this was my thought: "My grandfather told me when I was little: 'Grandchild, I shall tell you: A spirit dwells where this water comes forth,' said my Grandfather."

Now this was what I thought: "Probably there is no spirit here, whence comes this water. Suppose I lay some tobacco into this water; suppose I give it to the spirit. If he accepts this tobacco, it will spin about here in the water; it will go down under the water. If he accepts it, I shall believe that the thing is really so. But if it goes that way, downstream, there will be no spirit there."

That was my thought. Then I took my tobacco; I took my

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knife and cut off a piece of tobacco. Then I placed it into the water. There it lay in the water.

"Oh, my grandfather, I give you this tobacco that you may smoke!"

That is what I said. Then at one time it began to move; here in the water, here the tobacco began to swim. Four times it went in a circle round the water; and then in the very center of the water the tobacco went under, as the spirit accepted it.

"Now do I believe it; truly a spirit dwells here whence this water comes forth."

Such was my thought. That was what happened in this place.

Thereupon I went from there, continuing my hunt, and walking about. All day I had eaten nothing. Toward dark, as I walked on, I came to a house; a white man was he who dwelt there.

"Well, let me go there!" I thought.

Then I saw the white man in his house.

"Hello! Where are you going?" said the man to me.

"I am going around trying to hunt," I answered him.

"Oh, so that's it!" said he.

"Please, friend," I said to him, "I want to sleep here in the stable."

"Very well," said my friend.

"I have had nothing to eat, walking all day," I said to him.

"Why, then," said he to me, "you must take some food; come inside!" said he.

Then he told his wife: "Come, give this man something to eat; he has not had anything to eat, walking all day," said he to his wife.

"Yes," said the woman, "I shall give him food."

So then I ate. When I had eaten, I left; I went to the stable to sleep. The next morning the white man came.

"Now, friend, eat," he said.

So I went and ate, as my friend gave me food.

When I had eaten I started out. All day long I walked about without any food. When I got back to where I was camping, I had no food. In the morning I set out and hunted;

105. Bloomfield. *Menomini Texts*, pp. 37-43.

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all day long I did not come across a thing—deer, partridge, rabbit, or squirrel. When night came I lay down and rested. For two days now I had had no food. The next morning I set out again.

"Yes, if I come across a deer, I shall shoot it and have a meal!" was my thought.

I did not see any game, walking about all day; at nightfall I came to where I was staying. Now for three days I had had no food.

Then, as I sat there, I reflected: "My grandfather told me that sometime I should suffer hunger; this he said to me."

That was my thought, as I rested there. I cut off a piece of tobacco: into the fire I placed my tobacco, fixing my thought upon the spirit, in my hunger.

"Pray, help me! I wish to eat in the morning," I said, telling it to the spirit.

Then I slept. When I awoke it was near dawn; I took up my gun and set out to hunt. Perhaps half a mile, and I saw a big bear; it was eating acorns up a tree. I shot it; it fell to the ground. I went up to it: there lay the big bear.

"Well, now at last I shall eat!"

I took my knife; I cut a piece from it. When I had built a fire, I put in the meat to cook it. When I had cooked it done, I ate.

"At last I am saved!" I thought.

The sun had not yet risen. Then I skinned and dressed the bear. While I was busy at this, suddenly I heard something make a noise. I laid down my knife. When I looked about, why, there was a bear walking straight up to where I was. I took up my gun; good, a hit! and it fell. So then I had killed two bears before sunrise.

"Thanks be given," thought I, "to the spirit for helping me in my hunting."

Thereupon I arranged my pack and set out. I had gone perhaps two miles, when I came to where the white man lived. I went there; I saw the woman; the man was not there.

"Where is the man?" I asked her.

"Why, he has gone to town to work," said she.

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"I have killed some bears," I told her.

"Why, then," she said, "bring it here," she told me.

I went and brought it to the house.

"Very well," said she, "I shall cook; we shall have a meal."

I was glad indeed, as the woman cooked. When she finished her cooking, she set the table.

"Come, eat," she said; "I shall eat, too; I am very fond of this kind of meat," she said.

When we had made a hearty meal, I went off and brought the other bear to the house there.

"Please," I said to her, "I want to leave my store here in your house."

"All right," answered the woman.

"I am going home to my people; I am going to get a horse," I told her.

"Very well," said the woman.

I set out, and when I reached our house, I told my wife of it.

"I have killed two bears," I told her; "I have come to get the horse. My father-in-law will go with me."

"Very well," said she.

In the morning we set out. When we got there, the horses carried the packs, with the bears, as we brought them home. So now I was saved; two bears; there was plenty of meat.

This was the way I fared once upon a time, my friend.

That is all.

Pa'aku, "Come along!" He said, "I cannot; I am too little."

When they were gone, he started to go to the sky with the old man. They went up by a ladder. He told the old man, "Whatever happens, do not open your eyes." Then there was a high wind, but they climbed on. They went through hail, but the old man did not look. Then they came to the sky. They heard people

driving deer. Then the deer came. Pa'aku shot an all-red deer. He told the old man, "You too shoot." Then the old man also killed a (woodpecker-covered) deer. Each of them began to pack his deer home, but it was too heavy for the old man, so Pa'aku carried both. Now they returned, and he married the two girls.

[From *Yurok Myths*, pp. 324-25.]

From Serrinity Young, ed.

SIoux—THE SACRED PIPE *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women.* N.Y.: Carroll, 1993.

Central to North American spirituality is the sacred pipe, which is used in all the ceremonies of the Sioux, especially as an aid to communicating with the Great Spirit, here called *Wakan Tanka*. The following story tells how the people first got the sacred pipe and how they were instructed in its use. The excerpt is taken from Joseph Epes Brown's record of his conversations with Black Elk of the Oglala Sioux during the winter of 1947-1948.

Early one morning, very many winters ago, two Lakota were out hunting with their bows and arrows, and as they were standing on a hill looking for game, they saw in the distance something coming towards them in a very strange and wonderful manner. When the mysterious thing came nearer to them, they saw that it was a very beautiful woman, dressed in white buckskin, and bearing a bundle on her back. Now this woman was so good to look at that one of the Lakota had bad intentions and told his friend of his desire, but this good man said that he must not have such thoughts, for surely this is a *wakan* woman. The mysterious person was now very close to the men, and then putting down her bundle, she asked the one with bad intentions to come over to her. As the young man approached the mysterious woman, they were both covered by a great cloud, and soon when it lifted the sacred woman was standing there, and at her feet was the man with the bad thoughts who was nothing but bones, and terrible snakes were eating him.

"Behold what you see!" the strange woman said to the good man. "I am coming to your people and wish to talk with your chief *Hehlokecha Najin* [Standing Hollow Horn]. Return to him and tell him to prepare a large tipi in which he should gather all his people, and make ready for my coming. I wish to tell you something of great importance!"

The young man then returned to the tipi of his chief, and told him all that had happened: that this *wakan* woman was coming to visit them and that they must all prepare. The chief, Standing Hollow Horn, then had several tipis taken down, and from them a great lodge was made as the sacred woman had instructed. He sent out a crier to tell the people to put on their best buckskin clothes and to gather imme-

diately in the lodge. The people were, of course, all very excited as they waited in the great lodge for the coming of the holy woman, and everybody was wondering where this mysterious woman came from and what it was that she wished to say.

Soon the young men who were watching for the coming of the *wakan* person announced that they saw something in the distance approaching them in a beautiful manner, and then suddenly she entered the lodge, walked around sun-wise, and stood in front of Standing Hollow Horn. She took from her back the bundle, and holding it with both hands in front of the chief, said: "Behold this and always love it! It is *lea wakan* [very sacred], and you must treat it as such. No impure man should ever be allowed to see it, for within this bundle there is a sacred pipe. With this you will, during the winters to come, send your voices to *Wakan-Tanka*, your Father and Grandfather."

After the mysterious woman said this, she took from the bundle a pipe, and also a small round stone which she placed upon the ground. Holding the pipe up with its stem to the heavens, she said: "With this sacred pipe you will walk upon the Earth; for the Earth is your Grandmother and Mother, and She is sacred. Every step that is taken upon Her should be as a prayer. The bowl of this pipe is of red stone; it is the Earth. Carved in the stone and facing the center is this buffalo calf who represents all the four-leggeds who live upon your Mother. The stem of the pipe is of wood, and this represents all that grows upon the Earth. And these twelve feathers which hang here where the stem fits into the bowl are from *Wanbli Galeshka*, the Spotted Eagle, and they represent the eagle and all the wingeds of the air. All these peoples, and all the things of the universe, are joined to you

who smoke the pipe—all send their voices to *Wakan-Tanka*, the Great Spirit. When you pray with this pipe, you pray for and with everything.”

The *wakan* woman then touched the foot of the pipe to the round stone which lay upon the ground, and said: “With this pipe you will be bound to all your relatives: your Grandfather and Father, your Grandmother and Mother. This round rock, which is made of the same red stone as the bowl of the pipe, your Father *Wakan-Tanka* has also given to you. It is the Earth, your Grandmother and Mother, and it is where you will live and increase. This Earth which he has given to you is red, and the two-leggeds who live upon the Earth are red; and the Great Spirit has also given to you a red day, and a red road. All of this is sacred and so do not forget! Every dawn as it comes is a holy event, and every day is holy, for the light comes from your Father *Wakan-Tanka*; and also you must always remember that the two-leggeds and all the other peoples who stand upon this earth are sacred and should be treated as such.

“From this time on, the holy pipe will stand upon this red Earth, and the two-leggeds will take the pipe and will send their voices to *Wakan-Tanka*. These seven circles which you see on the stone have much meaning, for they represent the seven rites in which the pipe will be used. The first large circle represents the first rite which I shall give to you, and the other six circles represent the rites which will in time be revealed to you directly. Standing Hollow Horn, be good to these gifts and to your people, for they are *wakan*! With this pipe the two-leggeds will increase, and there will come to them all that is good. From above *Wakan-Tanka* has given to you this sacred pipe, so that through it you may have knowledge. For this great gift you should always be grateful! But now before I leave I wish to give to you instructions for the first rite in which your people will use this pipe.

“It should be for you a sacred day when one of your people dies. You must then keep his soul as I shall teach you, and through this you will gain much power; for if this soul is kept, it will increase in you your concern and love for your neighbor. So long as

the person, in his soul, is kept with your people, through him you will be able to send your voice to *Wakan-Tanka*.

“It should also be a sacred day when a soul is released and returns to its home, *Wakan-Tanka*, for on this day four women will be made holy, and they will in time bear children who will walk the path of life in a sacred manner, setting an example to your people. Behold Me, for it is I that they will take in their mouths, and it is through this that they will become *wakan*.

“He who keeps the soul of a person must be a good and pure man, and he should use the pipe so that all the people, with the soul, will together send their voices to *Wakan-Tanka*. The fruit of your Mother the Earth and the fruit of all that bears will be blessed in this manner, and your people will then walk the path of life in a sacred way. Do not forget that *Wakan-Tanka* has given you seven days in which to send your voices to Him. So long as you remember this you will live; the rest you will know from *Wakan-Tanka* directly.”

The sacred woman then started to leave the lodge, but turning again to Standing Hollow Horn, she said: “Behold this pipe! Always remember how sacred it is, and treat it as such, for it will take you to the end. Remember, in me there are four ages. I am leaving now, but I shall look back upon your people in every age, and at the end I shall return.”

Moving around the lodge in a sun-wise manner, the mysterious woman left, but after walking a short distance she looked back towards the people and sat down. When she rose the people were amazed to see that she had become a young red and brown buffalo calf. Then this calf walked farther, lay down, and rolled, looking back at the people, and when she got up she was a white buffalo. Again the white buffalo walked farther and rolled on the ground, becoming now a black buffalo. This buffalo then walked farther away from the people, stopped, and after bowing to each of the four quarters of the universe, disappeared over the hill.

[From *The Sacred Pipe*, pp. 3-9.]

SIoux RITUAL FOR PREPARING A GIRL FOR WOMANHOOD

The following excerpt is also taken from Joseph Epes Brown's record of his conversations with Black Elk.

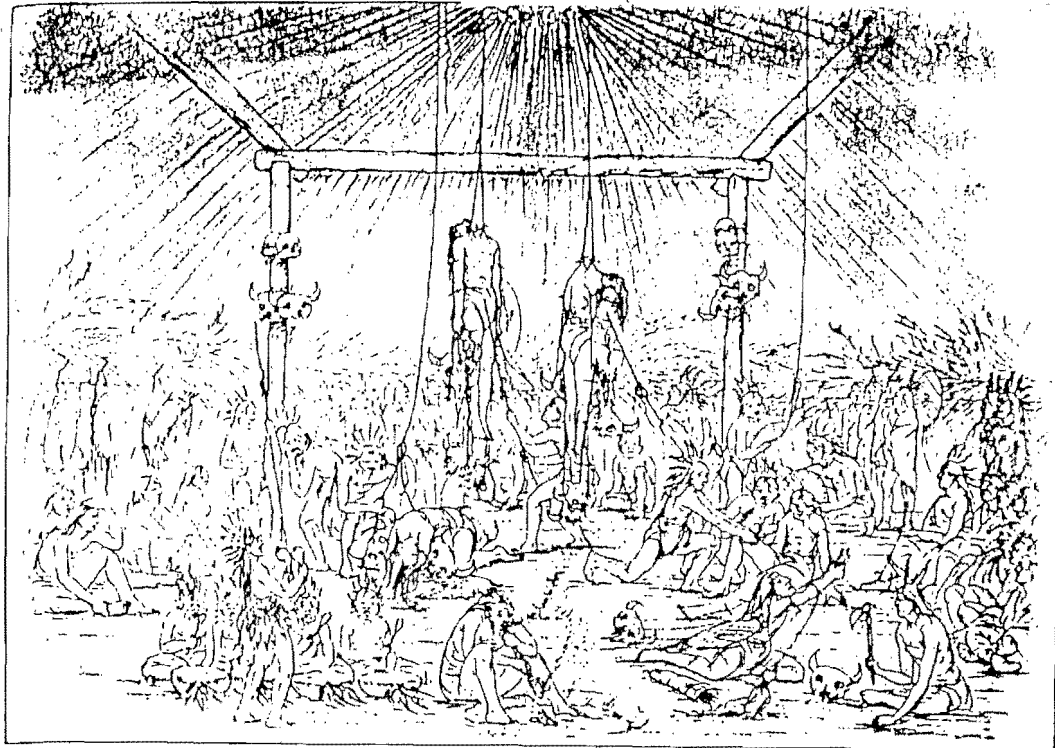
Isha Ta Awi Cha Lowan:
Preparing a Girl for Womanhood

These rites are performed after the first menstrual period of a woman. They are important because it is

at this time that a young girl becomes a woman, and she must understand the meaning of this change and must be instructed in the duties which she is now to fulfill. She should realize that the change which has taken place in her is a sacred thing, for now she will

Amanda Porterfield
The Power of Religion

Ny: Oxford 1998



Mandan torture ceremony. Drawing by George Catlin

Lakota Self-Sacrifice



In the soft light of early morning on the last day of July, with the last pink of dawn still visible in her rearview mirror, Cinda Stevens drives west on Interstate 90 in South Dakota toward the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the home of the *Oglala Sioux*, the largest subdivision of the western, or Teton, Sioux. Cinda is a nursing student, born and raised in a Midwestern city far from Pine Ridge. Although she has never been in contact with any Pine Ridge relatives, her mother's grandfather was born on the reservation. Hoping to meet some relatives, and to learn more about their religion, Cinda has decided to visit the annual Pine Ridge *sun dance*, a Plains Indian ceremony of spiritual and cultural renewal.

The sun dance originated in the eighteenth century, probably among the Cheyenne, and spread to other Plains tribes as a major ceremonial event drawing various populations together for feasting, courtship, religious purification, and ordeals designed to infuse hunters and warriors with experiences of spiritual power. Although it may have continued on

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in some form in secret, the sun dance in its full form died out among the western Sioux after it was banned in 1881 by the U.S. government as part of its efforts to destroy the "savage" customs of the Sioux and persuade them to accept western culture. But it was reborn in modified form on the reservations, where it emerged publicly after 1934, when the government ban against it was partially lifted. No longer a ritual instigated by hunters and warriors seeking power for future conquests, or seeking to repay the spirits for conquests already made, the sun dance became a ritual of spiritual renewal that helped the Sioux retain their cultural identity and endure the hardships of reservation life.

88 Along with the Brule, Hunkpapa, Mnikowojus, and other subdivisions of the western Sioux, the Oglala are often called *Lakota*, which is the name of their language. The Lakota are well known for their resistance to the U.S. Army and to the encroachment of western culture onto the northern plains during the nineteenth century. Today's Lakota descend from the tribes of the Hunkpapa Chief Sitting Bull, who led the Sioux war of resistance in the 1860s and 1870s, and the legendary Oglala warrior and holy man Crazy Horse, who joined Sitting Bull in defeating General George Armstrong Custer in 1876, killing nearly his entire force at the Battle of Little Bighorn. After this defeat, the U.S. Army conquered the Lakota, killing many, including Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. The Lakota were forced to relinquish most of their lands, give up their traditional occupations of hunting and warfare, and accept dependence on insufficient rations from the U.S. government.

In an attempt to reverse this desperate situation at the end of the nineteenth century, many Lakota embraced the *ghost dance*, a religious movement promising a supernatural transformation of life on earth, in which the broken and violated world the Lakota had come to inhabit would be rolled away, and the abundant world of the past, with its deceased inhabitants, rolled back in. The ghost dance began among the Paiute Indians of Nevada and swept through a number of western tribes stricken by disease, poverty, and the destruction of their life-

ways. Enthusiasm for the ghost dance declined swiftly among the Lakota after 1890, when U.S. soldiers massacred more than two hundred men, women, and children in Big Foot's Mnikowojus band at Wounded Knee Creek. Some of the men were wearing ghost shirts, painted with sacred emblems and figures, believed to protect the wearer from bullets. U.S. Army officers regarded these shirts as military provocations.

While forced to abandon their nomadic life as hunters and severely punished for their reputation as warriors, the Lakota retained important elements of their religion, including their spiritual concepts of war and warriors. Other traditional elements that persist in Lakota religion today include belief in *Wakan Tanka*, the creator God on high who is also a universal spiritual presence encompassing more than four hundred spirits in the Lakota pantheon, and belief in the importance of vision quests and similar forms of religious experience that establish personal relationships between individuals and spirits who bestow power on them. The Lakota also preserve commitment to the gifts believed to be brought to their people by the legendary White Buffalo Cow Woman as a means of communicating with the spirit world, especially the gifts of the sacred pipe, the sweat lodge, and the sun dance.

Since most of the Lakota are Christian (three-fourths of Pine Ridge residents are Catholic or Episcopal), the traditional elements of Lakota religion coexist with Christian belief and experience, and often blend together. Thus *Wakan Tanka* and the creator God described in the Bible are often understood to be one and the same, and Christian ideas about the redemptive power of Jesus's suffering confirm the traditional Lakota belief that self-sacrifice can be a means of gaining access to the spirit world. Both Christian clerics and traditional holy men have encouraged linkages between Christianity and Lakota religion, although the clerics tend to view Lakota religion as a preparation for Christianity, while the holy men assume the reverse.

In the 1970s, leaders of the leftist American Indian Movement (AIM) turned to the Oglala Sun Dance Chief Frank Fools Crow and to the life story of the Oglala holy man Black

Elk for spiritual instruction. As the religious education of AIM members deepened, the sun dance became increasingly popular among these and other urban Indians, as well as among tourists, and religious seekers looking to Lakota religion for inspiration. The sun dance has grown to accommodate this larger sphere of interested people, and now functions as a means of initiation into Lakota spirituality for those on the periphery of the culture, as well as an experience of spiritual renewal and means of affirming and developing Lakota religion for insiders. The sun dance is one of the most prominent expressions of Lakota religion today. Led by men at campsites both on and off the reservations, sun dances attract thousands of spectators each year, and dozens of individuals pledging to participate in traditional ordeals of self-sacrifice.

89 Like many of her New Age friends, Cinda is interested in Lakota spirituality because of its respect for the environment, and because it seems to offer an alternative to the consumerism, greed, and materialism that she believes are characteristic of American culture. In her view, the Lakota still represent a tradition of spiritual resistance to American culture, even if its military aspect has diminished. Cinda also feels a strong pull toward the people at Pine Ridge because she is a person with some Oglala blood, and she is eager to find the spiritual roots of her mother's people, and to sink some spiritual roots of her own in alongside.

With these somewhat romantic expectations, Cinda is not fully prepared for either the poverty or the commercialism she encounters when she leaves the Interstate and drives onto the reservation for the first time. She sees dilapidated homes, rusted-out cars, worn clothes, and a number of shops that look to her like tourist traps selling cheap pipes, fake headdresses, candy, and film.

"I don't know what I expected to find," she says aloud, chiding herself for being disappointed. "I guess I was looking for a Garden of Eden. An idyllic village scene with paint horses and a sparkling stream. Something out of a movie about Indians in the nineteenth century."

Following directions obtained at the Pine Ridge Visitor's Center, Cinda finds the campsite where the sun dance is being held. It is the second day of the four-day dance, and the campsite is crowded with people, cars, and innumerable tents set up in a large circle almost a quarter mile in diameter. Cinda parks her car and walks toward the tents, intent on observing as much as she can, and also on finding someone she can talk to, someone who will help guide her toward a real experience of Lakota spirituality.

As Cinda remembers from Fools Crow's account, the sun dance camp involves several concentric areas. The outer circle is comprised of tents and booths, where spectators eat, sleep, and visit, and where food and crafts are sold. Inside that circle are the sweat lodges and preparation tents, where pledgers stay during the four days of the sun dance, praying, fasting, resting, and receiving instruction. This middle circle also includes an open area through which the dancers pass on their way to the innermost circle, and through which spectators pass on their way to the shade arbor encircling the innermost area. The inner "mystery circle," as it is called, is considered sacred ground, and no one is allowed to enter without permission of the sun dance leaders.

In the center of the mystery circle stands the sacred tree. It was "killed" the day before the sun dance began in a ceremony symbolizing the suspension of ordinary growth and the establishment of a four-day hiatus in ordinary time in which spiritual transformation and renewal can occur. Carefully selected from a stand of forty- to fifty-foot cottonwoods, the tree has been blessed by the sun dance chief, chopped once on each of four sides by a young woman believed to be a virgin, and then cut down by several men and trucked to the sun dance campsite. With thanks to Grandmother Earth for producing it, the tree has been stripped of its lower leaves, planted in a hole in the center of the ceremonial space where the sun dance chief has deposited flesh offerings from his own body, and then hung with pouches of tobacco for the spirits, colored flags representing the spirits of the cardinal

directions, and doll-like representations of a holy man and a buffalo that may inspire visions in those who dance. As the focus of the dancers' religious experiences, the tree creates a sacred world in which power seems to flow between spirits and dancers, and between the dancers who communicate with the spirits and the people.

After inspecting the sacred tree from the shade arbor, Cinda watches the pledgers dancing in the hot sun for more than an hour. Later, she returns to the tent area, stopping at a booth where a middle-aged woman selling leather goods is working on a small fringed bag. The woman looks up in a friendly way, and Cinda plunges in.

96 "I'm sorry to interrupt you," Cinda says, "but I wonder if you could tell me where I could find out something about Lakota spirituality." Surprised by such a blunt request, the woman draws back a few inches and looks at Cinda quizzically, and somewhat dubiously. If outsiders come to the sun dance to be initiated into Lakota spirituality, they do not succeed easily, or without proving themselves worthy.

"My great-grandfather was an Oglala from Pine Ridge," Cinda adds quickly, hoping to avoid the woman's dismissal.

"Oh, well, then," says the woman, her smile returning. "Perhaps you have some relatives here. What was your grandfather's name?"

The two discuss names and families for a while, and Cinda repeats some of the things her mother has told her about her great-grandfather. The woman directs Cinda to a group of tents across the circle, and suggests that she introduce herself there.

"They might be related to your family," the woman says. "One of the men over there will be pierced tomorrow. And one of the women may give a flesh offering. They might help you find some of the experience you are looking for."

Thanking the woman for her help, Cinda moves away, ruminating about the possibility of meeting lost relatives, and apprehensive about suddenly coming close to people whose

religious beliefs were leading them to inflict deliberate and considerable pain on themselves. Uneasy, but intensely interested, she resolves to find out more about the religious experiences sought by the pledgers.

Walking around the circle to the cluster of tents the woman selling bags had described, Cinda approaches a man who looks like he might be in his seventies, sitting on a camp stool in front of one of the tents, smoking a hand-rolled cigarette, apparently deep in thought. Stopping a few yards away, she clears her throat, says hello, and explains that she is looking for some relatives. He looks her in the eyes for a moment, and then calls into the tent in Lakota. A small boy comes out, followed by his mother and grandmother, who greet Cinda politely. Another stool and some chairs appear, and they all sit together for a while, figuring out Cinda's relationship, pointing out the tents of other relatives around the circle, and telling stories about those who are gone.

"It is good that you have come during the summer for a sun dance," the man says after a while, "because the sun dance is traditionally the time when members of the same band come together and join other bands and other tribes. It is a time when the people get together, and the relatives come home."

Happy at being so warmly included, Cinda describes her desire for a firsthand experience of Oglala spirituality. "I know that I'm just a beginner," she confesses, "and that you have spent your lives in touch with the spirits and the reality they represent. And I know I have missed out on a lot, in terms of being trained and prepared for a real experience of the spirits. But I would like to go back with something to remember, something I can call on, and build on."

"There is a lot for you to learn, and you will need to be patient," the man responds. "The holy men will have to teach you. And the women will have to teach you. You will have to come back here many times to participate in the ceremonies, to learn from the people, and work with them."

"One more thing I will tell you," he says. "To receive power from the spirits, you must purify and humble yourself. You must be ready to cry to the spirits for help."



Having pitched her own small tent among those of her new-found relatives, Cinda is awakened just before dawn the next morning by the camp crier, calling the people to the third day of the sun dance, the day that the piercing will begin. After washing and eating, she and the others arrive in the shade arbor in time to see the pledgers file through the two yellow flags at the eastern door of the mystery circle. Some of the men are carrying pipes filled with sacred tobacco. Many of the men have figures or designs painted on their bodies, and quite a few have red circles painted on their chests indicating the spots where they will be pierced. They move clockwise around the mystery circle, stopping before the sun dance altar, located at the west of the circle, facing the rising sun. After placing their pipes alongside the altar, the pledgers sing, "*Tunkashila*, Grandfather, have pity on us. We have come here and are doing this so that everything will be right with us." The tension among the spectators is palpable, and some of the pledgers' relatives begin to cry, their sobs contributing to the petition to the grandfather spirit to infuse the pledgers, and their people, with spiritual power. One of Cinda's cousins points out his brother Ben, who has pledged to be pierced. Ben hopes to receive power from the spirits so that he can bring strength to his people as an ambulance driver, paramedic, and someday, he hopes, as a religious healer.

Moving to the north and then to the south, the pledgers sing and dance, raising their hands occasionally in appeals to Wakan Tanka or the guiding grandfather spirit *Tunkashila*, reaching up to touch their spiritual power and feeling it run down through their arms. Many participants in the sun dance believe that this contact with the spirits gives the dancers powers of healing, and at a certain point in the morning, the sun

dance chief admits a number of individuals who are sick or injured into the mystery circle to be blessed by the dancers. Through simple acts of touching, the dancers generate hope in these individuals, as well as feelings of being infused with holy power. After the healing blessings have been performed, Ben's older half-sister May asks permission to enter the mystery circle to make a flesh offering.

As a woman, May cannot be pierced. But she can smoke the sacred pipe, purify herself in the women's sweat lodge, receive instruction from the religious leaders of the sun dance, and pray and dance to the spirits, to Grandmother Earth, *Tunkashila*, and *Wakan Tanka*. And she can make a flesh offering.

May is inspired to make this self-sacrifice as part of her recovery from alcoholism. She needs help from the spirits to be a good influence on her children and nieces and nephews, and to go back to school so that she can get a good job and be a strong member of her community. And as in the other ordeals of the sun dance, the power May may receive as an individual as a result of her self-sacrifice is not a gift for her alone, but one that will benefit her community. As the older women explain it, the spirits might give power to the people through her.

Now within the mystery circle, May dances and sings, reaching her arm up to *Wakan Tanka*, and then down to Grandmother Earth. Feeling her weakness and fear like a presence inside her, May wants intensely to focus her life, find direction, and break through her fear. She cries to *Wakan Tanka* for help and strength. As the sun dance chief directs her to a spot on the ground near the altar, May tunes in on the drums, and allows their sound to fill her consciousness and expand her senses, so that the beat of the drums and the beat of her heart seem to be one, and she feels life in the ground beneath her, holding and lifting her toward the sky.

The chief sits down cross-legged on the ground next to her, takes some grey powdered medicine from a bag, and rubs it on the outside of her upper left arm, where May indicates she wants to take her flesh. He hands her a sharp razor. Using the thumb and index finger on both hands he pinches her skin

tightly in two places about two inches apart, raising the skin away from the muscles. With little hesitation, May makes the appropriate cuts and lifts out a small rectangle of skin. The chief rubs more medicine on her wound, takes the piece of flesh she gives him, and places it respectfully in another pouch, where he will keep it until he places it on the altar as a gift to the spirits. As he helps her stand up, May becomes aware of her weakness and then feels it flowing out of her as her body begins to sway. Moved by gratitude, relief, and happiness, she feels a new strength flowing into her body. The drums beating through her, she begins to dance, tears flowing down her cheeks, left arm lifted to the sky.

Later that day, Ben and a dozen other men are pierced. The holy man attending Ben makes two incisions on both sides of his chest, inserts wooden skewers under the skin on either side, and ties ropes to the skewers. Dazed from the piercing, and from two-and-a-half days without food or much water, he gets to his feet slowly, his head bent, his shoulders drooping. He follows his guide, who holds the loose ends of the ropes in his hands, walks closer to the sacred tree, and fixes the ropes in the fork of the tree above their heads. This task completed, the holy man begins blowing an eagle whistle, and Ben lifts his head up and steps backward, pulling against the ropes affixed to his chest, strengthened by the sound of the whistle and the feeling of spiritual power it invokes. Taking up his own eagle whistle, he blows it repeatedly, calling to Tunkashila. The sun shines through the leaves of the sacred tree above him, and through the hoop held by the figure of the holy man hung in the branches, which becomes for Ben a visible expression of the circle of people drawn in union and support around him. He feels exalted and strong. The skewers in his chest break through his skin and he stumbles backward, free.

The next day, other men are pierced for two different ordeals. Several are pierced in both breasts and in the center of the chest and then suspended a foot off the ground from ropes tied to four posts. One of the men dances, shoulders turning and feet stepping in the air as the drums beat and the

sun dance chief blows his eagle whistle. Cinda, her relatives, and all the people around them stand transfixed by the man's apparent communication with the spirit world.

Also on the fourth day, several men are pierced and attached with ropes to buffalo skulls. For some spectators, this is the culminating ordeal, and the courageous efforts the pledgers make to break free of the heavy skulls dramatize a common experience of life. Many of the spectators and pledgers have been pulled down by life, and the life of their people has been pulled down by many weights—poverty, unhappiness, bad health, untimely deaths, poor education, and lack of opportunity. The dancers drag the skulls across the ground, and when they weaken visibly, the sun dance chief invites children into the circle, who sit and ride on the skulls, adding weight to help the dancers in their struggle. Amidst encouragement and wailing from all sides, the dancers finally tear free, living symbols of the victory of their people.

As a witness to this culminating act of courage and self-sacrifice, Cinda feels that she, too, has been infused with the power of the spirits. She has also come to feel the strength of the Oglala people. As one who has begun to experience the power of the sun dance for herself, Cinda finds herself identified with the Lakota community and its ongoing effort to survive.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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