



Okteondon and His Uncle, The Planter, or, Winter Delaying Spring

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Native AmericanNorth American

Intermediate
24 min read

OKTEONDON lived in the woods with his uncle HAIENTHWÛS. The young man lay fastened under the roots of an elm tree which grew through his uncle's bark house. When very small, his uncle had hidden him there so nobody could carry him off. There were persons in the South who came North to steal the boys of the Wampum people.

Note: The original text featured OKTEONDON with a small "n," thus we have preserved it as such here.

One day, while the uncle was planting corn, he heard his nephew sing in a loud voice, "I am rising, I am rising."

The old man dropped his planting stick, and saying, "No, nephew, you are in too great a hurry," he ran home, and, finding that the boy had raised his head, he pushed him back, and said, "I will tell you when it is time to rise. As soon as you get up, women, who float around in a canoe, will come from the South and carry you away."

The next day the old man went out to plant corn and a second time his nephew began to sing and to try to get up. He ran home so fast that he lost his seed corn by the way and when he came to the house he found the tree leaning over. He put his nephew back, but the tree could not be fixed as firmly as before.

On the third day HAIENTHWÛS went to finish his planting, but the minute he began to drop seed he heard the song, "I am rising! I am rising!" He ran towards home but while running he heard an awful crash, and he knew the tree had fallen; when he reached the house OKTEONDO was sitting on the ground.

The old man didn't go back to his planting; he stayed at home to look after his nephew.

Early the next morning they heard women singing and soon a beautiful young woman came in; one of the Wild Duck sisters.

She put down a basket near the old man, and said, "Here is the marriage bread," and going to OKTEONDO she said, "I have come to take you home with me."

"Very well," answered the young man, and he was starting to go when his uncle stopped him, and said, "You must not go yet, you have friends coming, men whom these sisters have stolen. You must wait for them."

The women went away and the old man began to cook, He put over the fire a kettle with hominy (snow) in it, When the hominy was ready, three young men came in. HAIENTHWÛS invited them to eat and when they had eaten, he put clothing in a bundle and said to his nephew, "If your friends are in need of things, you will find them in this bundle."

The young man put on snowshoes, told his friends to walk in his tracks; and they started. The three young men found that walking in OKTEONDO's tracks was like walking on solid ground.

Toward night the young man saw a smoke and going near it found four fires and four young women. Each woman had her own fire.

"We will make our fires near theirs," said the young man.

When the fires were burning, he went boldly up to where the four sisters had their fires. Over each fire a kettle of hominy was boiling. He walked through the fires from the first one to the last, and threw the kettles over.

Three of the sisters were angry, but the youngest sister laughed.

OKTEONDO went back to his friends, and said, "I am going to hunt now," and he started off. Very near his fire he saw bear marks on a tree. He struck the tree, and said: "You who are in here, come out."

A bear came out; he killed it and carried the meat to the camp. Then he said, "I will bring my uncle's kettle," and going behind a tree he brought back a big kettle.

When the meat was cooked, the friends sat down and ate, and when all had eaten enough OKTEONDO said, "We will go to where our wives are, but we must not take any of this meat to them, if we do we will have bad luck."

When they came to the women, they found they had hominy cooked and were cooling it; they sat with their backs to the men, facing the direction they were traveling in. The youngest sister, whom OKTEONDO claimed as his wife, asked him to come and eat; the other sisters said nothing.

HÓTHO (Cold), one of the three friends, was naked; he had a hole through his hip and in that hole he carried a mallet; he chose the eldest of the Wild Duck sisters.

The women kept their canoe on one side of the first fire and when they undressed they put their clothes in the canoe.

The next morning the men went back to their fires, but one of them had lost his leggings and moccasins; his wife had stolen them.

The sisters warmed up the cold hominy and ate it. After eating they sat in their canoe and sailed away through the air.

OKTEONDO opened the bundle his uncle had given him, took out leggings and moccasins and gave them to the man whose wife had stolen his clothes.

When the men had eaten and were ready, they started off, following the canoe, the trail of which they saw in the air.

Towards evening the young man saw a smoke and when some distance from it, he said, "We will stay here."

Again he went to where the sisters were camped, walked through their fires and spilled their hominy. Then he went back to his friends and started off to hunt for game; but this time he had to go far, for the woman who had stolen the leggings and moccasins had long arms. She had stretched them out over the country, made a circle with them and told the game to go outside that circle. OKTEONDO had to go outside the circle too, before he could find a bear. When he had the bear, he went back to camp and said to the three men, "You have tired me with your folly. I told you not to take even one bite of our meat to those women. You disobeyed me."

He got a kettle as before, cooked some of the bear meat and they all ate heartily, then they went over to where the women were camped. Each woman was sitting with a dish of hot hominy on her knees, cooling it. Their faces were turned in the direction in which they were traveling.

The youngest sister asked OKTEONDO to eat. The young man grew angrier and angrier and in the night, when all were asleep, he said to a great tree that stood near the canoe the women traveled in, "I want you to bend down to me." The tree bent down to him and he fastened the canoe among its topmost branches, then he said, "I want you to stand straight." The tree stood erect. Then he said, "I want you to be covered with ice." The tree was covered with ice.

OKTEONDO did this because he was angry at the woman who had stolen the leggings and moccasins of one of his companions, and had driven the game away and made him go so far to hunt for a bear.

Early the next morning the young men went back to their own camp.

When the women couldn't find their canoe they ran around looking for it, ran for a good while. At last they saw it in the top of the tree. The eldest sister said, "I will try to get it down." She spat on her hands and feet, rubbed the spittle in and right away long nails, like bear claws, grew out on her fingers and toes. She began to climb, went half way up the tree, then lost her grip and came down, her claws scratching the ice as she slipped.

Now the sisters talked together and said that OKTEONDO and no one else, had done this. They asked him about it

and he said, "I put your canoe on the tree because you made me angry."

When they promised not to steal again, he told the tree to bend down. The tree bent to the ground and OKTEONDOOn took off the canoe and gave it to the sisters, who dressed themselves, took their food out of the canoe, cooked hominy, ate it and then sat in the canoe and continued their journey.

All day the four men followed the trail of the canoe. Towards evening they saw a smoke in the distance, but when they drew near they found a great lake covered with smooth ice.

In the middle of the lake the four sisters were camped. OKTEONDOOn said to his friends, "We will camp on the ice too." And getting a handful of dry leaves and hemlock boughs he said to the men, "Follow in my steps, and be sure to put your feet in my tracks."

When near the sisters' camp, he said, "We will camp here." He put down his handful of boughs and leaves and it became a great pile. He said, "I want a fire!" And there was a fire. He scattered a handful of hemlock boughs on the other side of the fire, and said, "Here will be our house and beds." And straightway a house of hemlock boughs covered their fire, and in the house was a place for each one of the four men to sleep.

The home of the sisters was on the edge of the lake, but they camped in the middle of it, on the ice, to see how the men would act and what power they had.

In the morning OKTEONDOOn saw that the banks of the lake were black with people.

The sisters went to their home on the land and their mother asked, "Which of your husbands has the most power?"

They answered "OKTEONDOOn."

Now OKTEONDOOn said to the three men, "We will go to the women, but you must not look at the people."

The four started, from their camp on the ice, for the shore. When they had gone a short distance three of them heard a voice singing, "We are raining bones. We are raining bones." They heard the song a second time, and nearer, then they heard a rustling noise and a mass of dry bones swept past them on the ice. OKTEONDOOn said "One of us has looked up and he has turned to bones."

At that moment all the people on the shore disappeared except an old woman who was walking back and forth singing, "OKTEONDOOn is my son-in-law. OKTEONDOOn is my son-in-law."

When the young man and his two friends came to the shore, the old woman went home and they followed her and went to her house. When there she said, "I will see if my daughters are getting you something to eat. You must wait here till I come back." Her house was of ice.

While she was gone, OKTEONDOOn took a small bundle of sticks and said, "Let them burn." Straightway the pile of sticks became large and there was a great fire. Then he said to the two men, "The old woman will bring food, out you mustn't eat it. I will eat it for it won't hurt me." He made a hole in the ice, took a reed and put it through himself into the hole.

The old woman came, and said, "Son-in-law, I have brought you a little to eat. It is the rule to eat only a little after a long journey."

The young man took the bark bowl and ate all the food, It ran through the reed into the ground. The food was hominy (snow) and bloodsuckers (clouds).

Soon she came with a second bowl, and said, "I have brought more for you. This is hominy cooked with maple sugar." (It was wild flint, a weed that floats on water.)

When the old woman's house was getting full of holes from the heat of the fire, she said, "Whu! My son-in-law has spoiled my house. We'll go to my daughters' house."

OKTEONDOOn's wife said to him, "My mother will try to kill you; she doesn't care about the other men for she knows what power they have and that she can kill them whenever she wants to."

Towards night the old woman said, "Whu! I think it's going to be cold to-night, I will get logs and make a great

fire to keep my back warm.” She brought logs from the woods and made a hot fire.

OKTEONDOOn’s wife said, “My mother will say to-night, ‘I dreamed that my son-in-law must go hunting and kill SKADA’GÉA. [In-the-Mist, a bird] and he must come back before the door that he slams behind him stops shaking. if he doesn’t, something bad will happen.’”

When night came, all lay down to sleep. In the middle of the night the old woman began to groan terribly, she rolled out of her place and into the fire with such force that she pushed the fire-brands and coals about the house.

OKTEONDOOn jumped up, took the corn-pounder, struck her and called out, “Well, Mother-in-law, what are you doing?”

The old woman sat up, and said, “Oh, I have had a dream. I dreamt that you, my son-in-law, must kill In-the-Mist and bring him in here before the door, that you slam behind you when going out, stops trembling. If you fail to do this, something bad will happen.

“Go to sleep, Mother-in-law,” said the young man, “we will see to that in the morning.”

The old woman lay down again and slept.

The next morning OKTEONDOOn was ready. He took hairs from his wife’s head and tied them together till he had a long cord. Then he tied one end of the cord to the door and giving the other end to his wife told her to jerk it and keep the door trembling till he came back from shooting In-the-Mist.

OKTEONDOOn started and before he had gone far from the house he saw In-the-Mist sitting on a cloud. He let go his arrow, and the bird fell to the ground.

The old woman was very angry when she saw that the door didn’t stop trembling after OKTEONDOOn had slammed it in going out. She pushed the door to, but her daughter kept it moving, unknown to her.

When OKTEONDOOn went in and threw the bird on the ground saying, “Here is a feast for you!” she said, “O, my son-in-law, you must give me one of the wings for a fan, my old one is worn out.”

“No,” said the young man. “You cannot have a wing,” and he threw the bird on the, fire.

HÓTHO, OKTEONDO’s friend, hung a kettle over the fire and filled it with water. As soon as the feathers were burned off the bird OKTEONDO cut it up and put the pieces in the kettle. When cooked he took out the meat and skimmed every drop of fat from the broth.

“Now,” said the old woman, “you must invite all the best men of the village to come and eat.”

“I’ll invite whom I please,” said OKTEONDO. He went out and shouted, “I invite you all, O Whirlwinds (DAGWANOEnYENTS), to a feast.”

Soon the guests began to come, one after another. When all were present, OKTEONDO said, “I have invited you to a feast at which everything must be consumed. You must eat the meat, drink the broth, chew up and swallow the bones.”

They finished everything, left neither a drop of broth nor a bit of bone. When they were through eating, they laughed and said, “The flesh of the old woman’s husband made a good meal.”

The woman was raving. She took a poulder and struck the guests. They flew up through the smoke-hole and off as fast as they could. One of them made a great rent in the side of the house as he rushed through.

When she had driven the guests out and the house was clear, the old woman said, “I think the night is going to be cold, I must go for wood.”

She brought wood, made a great fire, and said, “Now I will warm my back.” Then she went to sleep with her back to the fire.

OKTEONDO’s wife said, “My mother will dream again to-night, and will say, ‘I dreamed that my son-in-law was to kill the white beaver and bring it here before the door, that he slams when going out, stops moving. If he doesn’t get back before the door stops moving, something bad will happen.’”

Late in the night the young man heard his mother-in-law groaning. She rolled around, threw the wood from its place on the fire and scattered the coals.

He jumped up, took the corn-pounder, hit the old woman on the head, and said, "You must be dreaming about me, Mother-in-law."

"Yes, I was dreaming about you, and I am afraid something bad may happen, but you are powerful. The dream says that my son-in-law is to kill the white beaver, and if the door that he slams behind him stops trembling before he comes back, something bad will happen."

"Go to sleep, Mother-in-law, that is nothing."

In the morning, the young man fastened the cord made of his wife's hair to the door and told her to keep the door moving while he was gone. Then he went out and running to a knoll where there was a butter-nut tree, he took a nut from the tree and hurried to the lake. He threw the nut into the water, and said, "You who live in this lake, come out."

The water rose up and rushed after him till he reached the knoll where the butter-nut tree was, there it stopped. OKTEONDO saw the white beaver looking out of the water. He drew his bow, killed the beaver, seized the body and hurried home.

When he reached the door, the old woman was trying to hold it still and was repeating every word that had power to stop it.

When the young man threw the beaver into the house, she said, "My son-in-law, you must make me a pouch of this skin."

"Oh, no! I'll do what I like with it," said he, and he threw the beaver into the fire. HÓTHO put on a kettle, prepared everything and when the water was boiling, he put the beaver into the kettle and cooked it. Then the old woman said, "Son-in-law, I want you to invite all the chief men of this place to the feast."

"I will invite such men as I like," said OKTEONDO.

When the beaver was cooked, he took out the pieces of meat and cooled them, then going outside he called loudly, "I invite all you Whirlwinds to come to a feast."

They came and when all were there OKTEONDO said, "You must eat everything to the end. Here is meat,

broth, and bones. You must eat all, and lick the bowls.”

They ate the meat, swallowed the fat and drank the broth, then the crunching of bones could be heard. Last of all they licked the bark bowls.

When they had finished and were satisfied, they began to laugh. “Hi; hi; hi!” said they. “The flesh of the old woman’s brother has made us a good meal.”

The old woman was terribly angry. She ran at them with the corn-pounder and drove them out of the house.

After the feast OKTEONDO’s wife said, “There is one more trial, the worst of all. My mother will say to-night, ‘I dreamed that my son-in-law was killed and skinned and I made a pouch of his skin.’

OKTEONDO said, “When she kills and skins me and puts my flesh in a bowl, take the bowl and place it on the top of the house.”

Towards night the old woman said, “The sky is clear we will have a cold night, I must get logs and make a big fire.”

She made a great fire and in the night began to groan and throw the logs and fire about. OKTEONDO jumped up, struck her on the head with the corn-pounder, and said, “Mother-in-law, what is the trouble, what are you dreaming about?”

“I dreamed that I killed you and made a pouch of your skin.”

“Go to sleep, we will see to that in the morning.”

The next morning the young man said, “Now, Mother-in-law, I am ready.”

The old woman put a large piece of bark on the ground and told him to lie on it. He lay down, she struck him on the head and killed him. Then she took off his skin, leaving his hands and feet on the skin, and cutting up the flesh put it into a bark bowl. As soon as OKTEONDO’s wife saw her put in the last piece, she took the bowl and placed it on the top of the house.

The old woman sewed up the skin in the form of a pouch and distended it by blowing. Then she hung it over the

fire and poked the fire to make it blaze. The pouch swayed to and fro over the fire and the, old woman sang, “Oh, what a nice pouch have I, no woman living has such a pouch!”

Each time she punched the fire, the pouch swayed more quickly to and fro. At last it began to sing, “Oh, if the wind were out of me!” She poked and poked the fire and the pouch swayed faster and faster. “What a beautiful pouch I have,” said she, “it even sings.”

After a while the pouch made a noise: “Sho!” and went out through the smoke-hole.

As it went the old woman cried, “Oh, I’ve lost my pouch, I’ve lost my pouch! It has run away from me!”

She hurried to the door, but in going out she met her son-in-law coming in alive and well.

That night OKTEONDO had a dream; he groaned and rolled around till the old woman got up and hit him with the corn-pounder, saying, “Wake up!”

“I had a dream,” said he.

“What was it?” asked the old woman.

“I dreamed that I must kill the Ancient of Bears and have a feast and invite all the people in the village.”

The next morning the young man killed the Ancient of Bears.

HÓTHO got the kettle ready and when the flesh of the bear was cooked OKTEONDO said to his wife and the two friends, who had come with him from his uncle’s place, “You must go out of the house.”

They went out and the new company came in: the old woman and her other daughters and the people of the place. OKTEONDO said, “Here is flesh, fat, and bones. You must eat all that is placed before you and clean the bowls.”

The chief of the people said, “We have everything here before us. Now eat.”

OKTEONDO went out and ran around the house; while running he said, “Let this house become stone, and the ground under it be stone, so that the greatest wizard couldn’t get out, and let the house become red hot.”

While the people were eating and drinking and saying, “Ho, ho, this is a great feast,” the house began to grow hot. Someone spoke up so loudly that he was heard outside, and said, “Let us get out of here as quickly as we can. Something is wrong.”

They all tried to get out, but couldn't. One jumped up to where the smoke-hole had been, and those outside heard him knock his head against solid stone and fall back. Another said, “I will go out through the ground.”

After a while the voices and screams inside the house died down; and all was quiet.

The house cracked open, the heads of the people burst, one after another, and out of them came screech owls, horned owls, and gray and red foxes, and all rushed out of sight.

The people of the old woman's village were man-eaters. The sisters sailed around everywhere in their canoe, deceiving men and luring them to that village to be devoured. All the sisters, except OKTEONDO's wife were burned up with the old woman and the man-eaters.

The young man and his wife went to the lake shore where they found a great pile of bones; they gathered them up, put them under a large hickory tree, then pushed the tree and called out, “Rise up, or the tree will fall on you!”

At this call the bones sprang up living men, and each man went to his own home.

“We will go home too,” said the young man to his wife, and they went to the house of his uncle, HAIENTHWÛS.

When OKTEONDO went away his uncle hung up a belt, and said, “The deeper you are in trouble the nearer this belt will come to the ground, if you die it will touch the ground.”

The belt had touched the ground and the old man had mourned, but now it was up again.

While his nephew was away, many persons had come to the door pretending to be OKTEONDO and had deceived the old man. Now when his nephew knocked, he said, "Put your arm through the hole in the door." He did so. The old man tied it there firmly, then said, "Now, I have got you!" and he opened the door to strike whoever was outside, but seeing OKTEONDO and his wife he said, "Oh, my nephew, wait a minute till I clean up a bit." He brushed away the ashes and then he welcomed his nephew.

The narrator said that this story described winter trying to delay spring.

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