



The Drop Star

Charles Skinner

North American

Advanced
3 min read

A little maid of three years was missing from her home on the Genesee. She had gone to gather water-lilies and did not return. Her mother, almost crazed with grief, searched for days, weeks, months, before she could resign herself to the thought that her little one—Kayutah, the Drop Star, the Indians called her—had indeed been drowned. Years went by. The woman's home was secure against pillage, for it was no longer the one house of a white family in that region, and the Indians had retired farther and farther into the wilderness. One day a hunter came to the woman and said, "I have seen old Skenandoh,—the last of his tribe, thank God! who bade me say this to you: that the ice is broken, and he knows of a hill of snow where a red berry grows that shall be yours if you will claim it." When the meaning of this message came upon her the woman fainted, but on recovering speech she despatched her nephew to the hut of the aged chief and passed that night in prayer.

The young man set off at sunset, and by hard riding, over dim trails, with only stars for light, he came in the gray of dawn to an upright timber, colored red and hung with scalps, that had been cut from white men's heads at the massacre of Wyoming. The place they still call Painted Post. Without drawing rein he sped along the hills that hem Lake Seneca, then, striking deeper into the wilds, he reached a smaller lake, and almost fell from his saddle before a rude tent near the shore. A new grave had been dug close by, and he shuddered to think that perhaps he had come too late, but a wrinkled Indian stepped forth at that moment and waited his word.

“I come,” cried the youth,—”to see the berry that springs from snow.”

“You come in time,” answered Skenandoh. “No, ’tis not in that grave. It is my own child that is buried there. She was as a sister to the one you seek, and she bade me restore the Drop Star to her mother,—the squaw that we know as the New Moon’s Light.”

Stepping into the wigwam, he emerged again, clasping the wrist of a girl of eighteen, whose robe he tore asunder at the throat, showing the white breast, and on it a red birth-mark; then, leading her to the young man, he said,—”And now I must go to the setting sun.” He slung a pouch about him, loaded, not with arms and food, but stones, stepped into his canoe, and paddled out upon the water, singing as he went a melancholy chant—his deathsong. On gaining the middle of the lake he swung his tomahawk and clove the bottom of the frail boat, so that it filled in a moment and the chief sank from sight. The young man took his cousin to her overjoyed mother, helped to win her back to the ways of civilized life, and eventually married her. She took her Christian name again, but left to the lake on whose banks she had lived so long her Indian name of Drop Star—Kayutah.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com