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Tribal Love

By: Megan Young

June 14th, 1468

Our tribe had always been peaceful, but lately my family's wigwam has been full of anger, arguments, yelling and screaming. Mother and Father are fighting constantly and I have no idea why. If I ask what's wrong, they tell me nothing. I may only be twelve, but I do see the fighting and hear the harsh words. Nothing seems to calm or please them, and when there's not arguing, there's silence and dirty looks. I wish they would stop, or I could help somehow.

June 15th, 1468

I tried asking Chief Big Bear but he said that the elders may be wise but they don't know everything. He told me to stop worrying and ask the Creator for help. However, later on he called upon me and told me something very special. He told me that I was the only one in the entire tribe that was part Cree and part Ojibway. I think that's quite interesting, especially since everybody else is full Cree. He tells me that Father comes from the tribe a little north of here, Big Moose Upon The Cliff, where everyone is Ojibway. It's quite interesting and fascinating but he says that it's no reason to fret.

June 16th, 1468

Father has told me that he must go away for a while, and Mother says it's a hunting trip, but nobody else is leaving. I'm very worried for Father, and I know that they're lying. I've been praying to the Creator to help me understand, and to help them stop arguing. Chief tells me that I must be prepared for the future, and for a big event. He tells me something very scary is going to happen, but I will be brave. Hopefully, everything will be okay.

June 17th, 1468

Mother is keeping me busy, helping her with things I don't usually do. At least the arguing has stopped. I wonder what Chief meant. I think he's been avoiding me all day. At least I haven't thought about Father until now. Oh poor Father. He must be so sad, and lonely. I wonder if he's made it to his destination yet. I hope he will bring home plenty of animals. Mother has told me he's gone home and says it's where he belongs. It's only been a day but I miss him so much already.

June 18th, 1468



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I talked to Chief Big Bear today, and I have a strange premonition. I was walking today and I saw a wolf fighting with a moose and it made me think of our two tribes, Father's and ours, Gray Wolf. He tells me it's warning me of what's to come and that he feels it coming. I still don't know what it is but I fear it more and more each day.

June 19th, 1468

Today, there was panic in the tribe; Chief Big Bear announced that Father's tribe had announced war.

June 20th, 1468

I had another strange dream. I was sitting in my wigwam peacefully when suddenly a drum started beating. It was a steady beat, like the beat of a calm heart. I followed the drum but as I walked the beat grew rapidly. I continued to go towards the sound, but as the beat quickened, I quickened my pace. The drum had reached its climax then suddenly, it stopped. I was standing at a river and I stood over it and looked at my reflection. I heard an eagle screech and simultaneously the water became red. My reflection was crying. I heard another eagle screech and looked up. Coming towards me was a large eagle and it seemed to fly right through me. I awoke to the same drumbeat and poked my head outside secretly. The people were preparing for war. The men's faces were painted and their hands held weapons. The women were weeping as they said goodbye to their husbands and sons, but Mother was standing solemnly behind me watching. She whispered to herself, "The time has come," and folded the wigwam shut. That day the men left the tribe and women took it upon themselves to make weapons. This dream haunts me and the Blood's River frightens me. Though it's only a feeling, whatever Chief warned me about was upon us.

June 21st, 1468

I was too stirred to dream. All around me I heard drums and screaming. My heart raced like the drum in my dream. Today was a day of sorrow for me. While cooking and making weapons, I overheard some older women talking. They spoke of the opposing tribe, Father's tribe. I asked Mother about this but she only turned away and looked off into the sunset. Another day has ended. Another question unanswered.

June 22nd, 1468

I awoke to Mother shaking me furiously. "A message in smoke for you," she explained urgently. Apart from the war, our tribe was peaceful. Overhead was a cliff protecting us from strong winds or rain flashes. We sat in a valley near a river, a perfect spot for our



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tribe. Today, atop that cliff was a series of smoke. I understood it as, “I love you New Flower. Love, New Hope.” This means that Father is still alive! After the smoke faded, I realized the trees that had once covered the cliff, had been burned. Now the cliff looked barren. Later, a few warriors came back, one for healing, the rest for supplies. I hope the war is almost done, and I hope Father lives.

June 23rd, 1468

Today is a great day of tragedy, sorrow and destruction. There was an enormous battle near our tribe and fortunately, Father escaped. He had been wounded days ago, and now had a broken leg. He had collapsed near the river, about 3 km west of our tribe. I’d been sent to gather water, but instead, I gathered blood. Father told me all about the war, how he tried to stop his chief, how he was seen as a traitor and nothing else, to both tribes. He told how he had tried to keep peace, to prolong the attack on the tribe itself. He told how he had loved me deeply and wished he could’ve stopped the war. Then he fainted. Desperately, I did my best to carry him back to the tribe. I’d thought they would heal him, but I was wrong. I brought him to Mother and he opened his eyes briefly to see Mother’s rage. I now realized this was a fatal mistake. Father spoke his last words, “New Flower, bring hope to everyone as you gave hope to me.” Then Mother struck him, right in front of my eyes, while he lay in my arms, and killed him. I wept for many hours before I brought him back to the river, said a prayer to the Creator and kissed Father’s corpse goodbye. It was marked with signs of peace, not war. I wept as I pushed his body into the river and watching it flow gently downstream. I looked at my reflection, and just like in my dream, it was crying and blood had polluted the water. I ran back and warned the elders of the attack then, after they ignored me, Mother tried to explain. I wouldn’t speak to her, but she continued, “He had gone back to speak to his old chief. He told the chief of his beautiful wife and daughter. His chief however, told him to save us from the ambush. He sprinted back to me and told me of this news. We argued about whether to fight or hide. We didn’t agree. He said he couldn’t fight against his own brothers and family, but I couldn’t watch helplessly as my tribe suffered. I ended up banishing him and...”

I spoke briefly, “When he returned to say goodbye, you killed him.” I was cold, blunt and harsh and didn’t bother to listen to her further explanations. She’d killed Father and now, she should be exiled. I returned to the place where I’d put Father in the river. Flowers had grown there, hope for the end dwelled in my heart but sorrow for Father’s death was too overcoming. I never knew the outcome of the war, because I took the stone beside me and knocked myself unconscious as I fell into Blood’s River.

Author’s Statement

I tried to base this story on modern ideas, such as divorce, parental arguments, or the pain of war. Tribes often fought over land before the Americas were discovered, but what would happen if your mother was from one tribe and your father from another? How would you deal with the war? Would you take your mother’s side or your father’s?



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Divorce can be a very difficult and excruciating thing, as war can be also. When you've lived with peace your entire life, then suddenly your peaceful life is traded for a life full of arguments, death, mourning and pain, it's incredibly hard to deal with. Divorce and war leaves a young native girl choosing not only sides between her mother and father, but also her tribe or her father's tribe. Does she defend the Cree or the Ojibway? As historic as any event, the death of a parent is memorable and unforgettable. Death is tragic, war is devastating, and a divorce is haunting. Though this event may not be in any history textbook, any child who endures a divorce, the death of a parent or war, knows that these events are more historic in their lives than anything else.