

THE WOMAN WHO FELL FROM THE SKY

When time was young, there were two worlds, the upper world and the lower world. Divine Sky People lived in the upper world. Great Water covered the earth in the lower world, and there the only living beings were the animals who knew how to swim. Great Darkness covered everything between Great Water and the upper world.

In the upper world, the Sky People had a great chief, who had a lovely daughter named Atahensic. It came to pass that the goddess Atahensic became very ill with a strange disease. The medicine man tried one remedy after another, but nothing would make her well.

A great corn tree stood near the chief's lodge and provided the Sky People with their principal food. It came to pass that a Sky Person dreamed that the goddess would be cured if the chief placed her on the ground by this tree and then dug up the great tree by its roots.

To the chief, the welfare of his daughter was more important than the welfare of his nation. Consequently, as soon as the chief heard the Sky Person's dream, he decided to follow its prescription without delay. He placed Atahensic beside the great corn tree and directed other Sky People to dig the earth away from its roots. The great tree soon toppled to the ground with a thunderous crash.

Alarmed by the terrifying sound, another Sky Person—a young man—ran toward the great corn tree and was horrified to see that it had been uprooted. It was clear that the chief had committed an outrageous act! The young man turned to his chief and unleashed his fury. "You have no right to destroy this tree!" he exclaimed. "Without its fruit, we will all die of starvation! Even the life of a chief's daughter is not that important!"

The removal of the corn tree's roots had left a large hole in the ground. The young man was so enraged that, before the chief could stop him, he kicked Atahensic into that hole.

Down, down, down the goddess fell, through the hole that formed a tunnel from the world above into the dark world below.

Loon was the first to see the glow that marked the fall of the goddess, and he decided to rescue her. He called out to the other water animals, "Look! Sky Woman is falling into our world! She needs our help, or she will drown!"

Loon caught Atahensic on his wings and then slowly descended with her to the Great Water on which he lived. Meanwhile, many of the animals wished to do their part to save Sky Woman's life, so they gathered together and made a raft of their bodies on which she could rest.

Sky Woman landed safely, and the animal raft was able to support her. However, the animals could not live forever in the form of a raft, and Sky Woman could not live forever upon their backs. The animals needed to rest, and the goddess needed to move about. So it came to pass that the water animals who were forming the raft said, "We must come up with a better plan to care for Sky Woman! We are all tired out! Do any of you have a good idea?"

Great Turtle was the first to volunteer. "Place her upon my back," he directed. "Mine is larger and stronger than all of yours put together!"

Once they had done this, Muskrat said, "That is all well and good, for now! But Sky Woman will surely die unless we can create a bed of earth upon which she can live. It will have to be large enough for her to be able to walk happily during the day and to sleep comfortably at night."

"I agree," Great Turtle said. "Those of you who think that you can do it should dive down to the bottom of Great Water, bite off a piece of the earth that you find there, and carry it back up here in your mouth."

It came to pass that Muskrat was the first to muster the courage necessary to make the deep dive. He was followed by Beaver, and then by Otter.

Beaver was the first to return alive. He was very tired and very short of breath, but when Great Turtle looked inside his mouth, he could find no earth. Otter returned quite a while after Beaver. He was more tired and more short of breath, but when Great Turtle looked inside his mouth, he could find no earth.

By this time, all of the water animals had become very worried about Muskrat, who had not yet returned from the deep. While they were discussing what to do, Muskrat's body suddenly reappeared on the surface of the water. He was dead.

However, Muskrat had been as skillful as he was courageous, for clutched in his claws and lodged inside his mouth was earth from the bottom of the sea.

Great Turtle gave the earth to Sky Woman, who spread it carefully around the edges of Great Turtle's shell. The more earth she spread, the larger grew Great Turtle's shell and the more earth there was to spread. In fact, the earth continued to grow broader and deeper until it formed an enormous expanse of dry land, called Great Island. And from that day to this, Great Island has rested upon Great Turtle's shell.

It came to pass that on Great Island the goddess Atahensic recovered from her strange disease, just as the dreamer had dreamed she would. Sky Woman now built herself an earth lodge and, despite the eternal darkness, she lived happily with the water animals for neighbors. In time, she gave birth to a baby girl, who became known as Earth Woman.

It came to pass that one day, as Earth Woman was digging the wild potatoes that grew in the dirt of Great Island, she inadvertently forgot to face the west and, instead, faced the east. Not long after that, Earth Woman found that she had become pregnant. West Wind had blown into her body and had made her pregnant.

Just as her birth pangs were beginning, Earth Woman heard the twin sons within her body angrily arguing about when and how to be born. Evil Twin, who was bold and selfish, was determined to emerge first, from his mother's armpit. Good Twin, who was gentle and unselfish, was content to emerge second, in the usual way. So it came to pass that, while Good Twin was being born, Evil Twin impatiently burst forth from their mother's side, thereby causing her death.

Sky Woman buried Earth Woman on Great Island and reared her twin grandchildren by herself. Good Twin was her favorite. She had no love for Evil Twin, whom she blamed for the death of her daughter. Every day, she would sit by Earth Woman's grave and weep over her.

It came to pass that, in time, Good Twin became tired of living in eternal darkness. He told his brother, "I want to create a great light that will illuminate our world."

"Do not be absurd!" Evil Twin replied. "Our world is good enough as it is! Leave it alone!"

Despite his brother's opinion, Good Twin was determined to live in a bright world. Therefore, from his dead mother's face, he fashioned a brilliant sphere, which he tossed high into Great Darkness to shine upon Great Island each day. From the back of his mother's head, Good Twin then fashioned a smaller sphere and many tiny spheres, which he also tossed high into Great Darkness to shine upon Great Island each night. So it came to pass that Great Island and Great Water enjoyed Sun, Moon, and Stars, and with them, Day and Night.

It then came to pass that, nourished both by Sky Woman's tears and by Sun, the Three Sisters began to push through the earth that covered Earth Woman's body—the squash vine from what remained of Earth Woman's head, corn plants from her chest, and bean planes from her arms and legs. Good Twin loved these plants, and so he asked Thunder to provide the rain that they would need in order to flourish.

In their own time, the twin boys grew to become young men. They continued to have different personalities and different opinions. However, they agreed that the time had come to prepare Great Island for the Eagwehoewe people, who would soon live on it. They planned to start out together, to spend the day apart from each other, and to meet at their lodge, as usual, that night. When they separated, Evil Twin would walk toward the west, while Good Twin would walk toward the east. And, as they walked, each would create such things as lakes, forests, plants, and animals. Then, during the next two days, each brother would take the other to see what he had created.

So it came to pass that as Good Twin walked toward the east, he would reach down to the earth at his feet, pick up a handful of dirt, and toss it. Sometimes he tossed it in front of him; other times he tossed it behind him. Sometimes he tossed it to the right of him; other times he tossed it to the left of him. Sometimes he tossed it on the ground; other times he tossed it into the air. However, no matter where Good Twin tossed his handful of dirt, living plants or animals came into being. Meanwhile, wherever Good Twin had placed his feet, maple trees began to grow.

Still determined to be the first in everything, Evil Twin, whose Iroquois name means "like flint," was the first to show off his creations. Unlike Good Twin, he possessed an evil imagination and enjoyed creating mischief. Consequently, he had

created a range of mountains on his part of Great Island. It was difficult to walk there because of all the rocks underfoot and the many treacherous ledges.

As they traveled, Good Twin was annoyed by the company of Mosquito, who was as large as Turkey. Finally, Good Twin told him to run away. Mosquito then ran toward a young tree, stuck his sharp, pointed nose into the slender trunk, and caused the tree to fall to the ground.

"You cannot do that, Mosquito!" Good Twin exclaimed. "The Eagwehoewe people are soon going to live on Great Island, and if this is what you do to a tree, I can see what you will do to them! They are much weaker than a tree, and they will surely die from the thrust of your nose!"

With these words, Good Twin grabbed Mosquito and rubbed him between his hands until he had become very small. Then he opened his hands and blew Mosquito away. From that day to this, Mosquito has remained just as Good Twin changed him. In the course of their walk, Evil Twin also showed Good Twin the fierce animals that he had made: Bear, Wolf, and Panther, as well as Fox, Porcupine, Raccoon, and Snake. These animals were all much larger than they are today.

Good Twin looked at these huge predators and exclaimed, "What have you done, Brother? The Eagwehoewe people are soon going to live on Great Island, and these fierce animals will surely kill them!"

Good Twin did not have the power to undo what his brother had created, but he was able to make each animal smaller, so that the Eagwehoewe people could hunt and trap them for their skin and their meat. It was then that Good Twin spied Partridge, whom he had created, but who was now on Evil Twin's land.

"What are you doing here, Partridge?" Good Twin asked him.

"Toad came onto our land and drank up all the water," Partridge replied. "I have heard that if there is any water left, I will only find it here in the land of Flint!"

"Where is Toad?" Good Twin asked his brother.

"I was just about to show him to you," Evil Twin replied. "Of all the animals that I have created, I love him the best! I have fashioned him to be so thirsty that he will drink every drop of fresh water on Great Island."

When Good Twin found Toad, he took one look at his bulging body and shot an arrow into his neck. Suddenly all of Great Island's fresh waters poured forth in a great waterfall that ran off in different directions as the first rivers.

Good Twin was quick to divide each river down the middle so that half the water flowed in one direction and half flowed in the other. "I want one side of every river always to flow downstream," he explained to his brother. "Then the Eagwehoewe people will not have to work at paddling their canoes. Instead, they can float with the current!"

"I cannot let you do this!" Evil Twin exclaimed. "The Eagwehoewe people will have to work for whatever they get!" And, with these words, Evil Twin changed all of his brother's rivers so that their waters flowed in only one direction. Moreover, he was not satisfied until he had placed waterfalls, whirlpools, and rapids in many places on each of them. From that day to this, the rivers have remained just as Evil Twin changed them.

Evil Twin was very angry that Good Twin had changed the animals, reptiles, and insects that he had created, but he did not say anything aloud. However, to himself he said, "Just wait until tomorrow, Brother, when you show me what you have created! You have seen what I have done to your rivers. Tomorrow, you will see what I will do to everything else that you have made to please the Eagwehoewe people!"

The following day, the twins walked toward the east so that Good Twin could show Evil Twin the fine animals and the beautiful trees that he had created.

Evil Twin was annoyed to see that the animals his brother had created—Buffalo, Elk, Deer, Dog, Rabbit, Squirrel, and Bird—would be useful to the Eagwehoewe people. They were so fat that they would be easy to catch and good to eat.

Later, Evil Twin returned to the area. Despite their cumbersome size, he quietly gathered together all of the animals that Good Twin had created and herded them toward a great cave. Using Good Twin's food as bait, he then imprisoned them inside the cave, blocking the entrance with a huge boulder. He smiled with satisfaction as he imagined how they would all die of starvation.

However, Bird had followed Evil Twin and watched him from above. Bird then flew to Good Twin and told him what Evil Twin had done. Good Twin followed Bird as he flew through the trees in the forest until, in time, Bird led him to discover the huge

boulder that blocked the entrance to the cave. Good Twin gathered all his strength and pushed aside the boulder, permitting his animals to regain their freedom.

Evil Twin also noticed that his brother had created sycamore trees that produced sweet fruits and sugar-maple trees whose syrup dripped from the branches.

Of course, Evil Twin was not at all happy with what Good Twin had done. "Brother, I see that you and I can never agree on anything!" he exclaimed. "If I let you have your way, the Eagwehoewe people will have too happy a time! However, as you are beginning to see, I do not intend to let you have your way!"

So it came to pass that Evil Twin later went about from animal to animal, shaking each one until it became smaller and thinner. From that day to this, these animals have remained just as Evil Twin changed them.

Evil Twin then turned his attention to the sycamore tree and caused its fruit to become small and of no use. He changed the sugar-maple tree's syrup to a sweet water. And from that day to this, these trees have remained just as Evil Twin changed them.

It came to pass that one night not long thereafter, Earth Woman appeared to Good Twin in a dream. "Beware of your evil brother, my son!" she exclaimed. "He will try to kill you by any means. So, meet his treachery with your own!" And with these words, she disappeared.

The next morning, Evil Twin said to his brother, "It is clear that we will never be able to get along! I am furious with you for changing my creations, and you are furious with me for changing yours. So I suggest that we fight each other for the control of Great Island. Do you agree?"

"I agree to the idea of a contest, and I agree to the prize," Good Twin replied, "but I would like to avoid violence. We should just have a race."

"I agree to that," Evil Twin replied, "but I insist that the victor will then have the right to do whatever he wishes to the loser! And you may as well know that if I win—and, of course, I will win—I will take the wind of life from you!"

"So tell me," Evil Twin concluded, "what is it that can hurt you? If you will confide in me, I will confide in you!"

"I fear the wild rose," Good Twin revealed.

"And I fear Buck's horns," Evil Twin confessed.

So it came to pass that once the twins had chosen their racing path, Evil Twin collected large quantities of the wild rose bush from their grandmother, the goddess Atahensic, who had created it. He placed its branches on the trees that grew along Good Twin's side of the path, and he scattered its flowers on the path itself. Meanwhile, Good Twin wandered through the forest collecting many of Buck's horns, which he then scattered upon Evil Twin's side of the path.

Just as the sun began its morning journey, the twins began their race. Evil Twin, who was always determined to be the first in everything, was so certain that he could outrun his brother that he permitted Good Twin to start first.

Evil Twin chased Good Twin all that day, tearing up mountains and trees like a great whirlwind as he raced after him. However, whenever Good Twin became tired, he would snatch some of the wild rose and eat it, thereby recovering his energy. Evil Twin found no such respite from his own fatigue because Buck's horns were constant thorns in his feet. Therefore, Evil Twin could not catch up to his brother that day. And no matter how Evil Twin pleaded, Good Twin would not stop and permit him to rest.

The sun began its journey on the second day while Evil Twin continued to chase Good Twin, tearing up mountains and trees like a great whirlwind as he raced after him.

However, whenever Good Twin became tired, he would snatch some of the wild rose and eat it, thereby recovering his energy. Evil Twin found no such respite from his own fatigue because Buck's horns were constant thorns in his feet. Therefore, Evil Twin could not catch up to his brother that day. And no matter how Evil Twin pleaded, Good Twin would not stop and permit him to rest.

The sun was ending its journey on the second day when Good Twin became the first to reach the finish line. By this time, Evil Twin felt defeated by exhaustion as well as by the constant thrust of Buck's horns. He pleaded with Good Twin to let him stop where he was and rest, but Good Twin had the right of the victor to insist that his brother finish the race. At last, Evil Twin dragged himself to the end of the path and collapsed at Good Twin's feet.

"Do not kill me, Brother!" he pleaded.

"But, according to our agreement, that is exactly what I must do!" Good Twin exclaimed. "The idea of the contest was yours. The idea of the prize was yours. And, despite my objections, the idea of violence was yours. As the winner, I must treat you as you would have treated me if you had won!" And with these words, Good Twin picked up a branch of Buck's horns and beat his brother until the last wind of life had escaped from his body.

That night, the soul of Evil Twin came to Good Twin and said, "I would like to join you in our lodge."

"That I cannot permit you to do," Good Twin replied.

"Then, I bid you farewell, for you will never see me again!" Evil Twin exclaimed. "I will travel far to the northwest, to the Land of the Great Silence, and there I will wait for all among the Eagwehoewe people who die to join me. Know that, from this time forth and forever, it is I who will have power over the soul once the last wind of life leaves the body. The souls of the dead will leave Great Island and will live in my land forever." And with these words, Evil Twin left on his journey and became Evil Spirit.

Good Twin repaired the damage to the mountains and the trees that their chase had caused. Then he created the Eagwehoewe people, who would inhabit Great Island. From the dirt at his feet, he formed a male and a female figure that resembled himself and his mother. He then bent down and breathed the wind of life into their nostrils, making their souls come alive. Then Good Twin disappeared from Great Island.

First Man and First Woman loved each other, and from their union the first six pairs of the Eagwehoewe people came forth from the heart of Great Island. They all spoke the Iroquois language, and they became the ancestors of all the Eagwehoewe people.

The first pair traveled toward where the sun begins its morning journey, and they settled beside a great river. They became the parents of the Mohawk people and the keepers of the eastern door. For two and a half days, the second pair traveled toward where the sun ends its journey, and they settled beside an enormous boulder. They became the parents of the Oneida, the "upright-stone people." The third pair continued to travel toward where the sun ends its journey, and they settled on Mount Onondaga.

They became the parents of the Onondaga people and the keepers of the central council fire.

The fourth pair continued to travel toward where the sun ends its journey, and they settled by a long lake from which a mountain rises like a great pipe. They became the parents of the Cayuga, the "long-pipe people." The fifth pair continued to travel toward where the sun ends its journey, and they settled along the western border of the land of the Eagwehoewe people. They became the parents of the Seneca, the "great-hill people," and the keepers of the western door. The last pair traveled toward where the sun begins its morning journey and settled on the shore of Great Water. They became the parents of the Tuscarora people.

In the beginning, the first five families resolved that from that time forth and forever, despite differences in language and in location, they, their children, and their children's children would always understand each other and would remain united. It was they who established the great Iroquois nation. In time, the sixth family joined the Iroquois League.

So it came to pass that the Eagwehoewe people inhabited Great Island just as Good Twin had known they would. And their Confederacy of the Six Nations has brought everlasting fame to their nation.