

Lakota

The Woman Who Lived with Wolves

This story, dear Readers and Listeners, comes from ancient times when there were wars between the peoples who lived on the Great Plains. Young men wanted horses, and they would travel great distances to capture them from their enemies. With war between the peoples, it could be dangerous to walk far from the safety of the tipi village. This story tells how it could even be dangerous for a young woman to walk to the river in the early morning.

While the woman was filling her parents' water pail she never noticed enemies on horseback hiding among the willow bushes. As she paused to comb her hair in her reflection, a man ran up behind and threw his blanket over her head, smothering her screams for help. In a moment they had tied her up like a bundle and had thrown her up in front of one of the riders. Unable to see, she struggled until she was exhausted.

The strangers rode hard, calling to each other in a language the woman could not understand. After a while they untied her and put her on a horse which one of them led by a rope. It was her uncle's horse, and she recognized many other horses that the strangers



had stolen from the village. Day after day they drove the horses westwards, through country she had never seen, until they reached their village at the foot of snow-capped mountains.

People in the enemy village were kind, but the women knew that she was sad and lonely, for they heard her crying at night. One day when the men were away hunting, the women came to her, leading a horse and put the bridle into her hands. They gave her a knife and a bag of dried meat tied up in a blanket. Pointing toward where the sun rises, they told her by signs to go quickly, to find her way home.

The young woman rode all that day and through the night. The following day she tethered her horse, and while keeping a lookout for anyone following her trail, she slept from time to time. When she awoke toward evening, the horse was nowhere to be seen. Thinking it might have set off back home, she walked a little way back along her trail, but the horse had vanished.

She walked after that. Day after day she walked the endless distances. When the soles of her moccasins were worn through, she cut strips from her blanket to wrap her tired and blistered feet. She was lonely, and frightened, and without hope that she would ever see her parents again.

