

THE WEEPING ROCK

A Legend Based on Kwakuitl Tales

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by

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CHORUS A DIRGE. DOWN BG TO

NARRATOR Meeriluk was dead, the great leader, King of men,
they sang by the crouching fires, Meeriluk has gone
away....

CHORUS UP SLIGHTLY

TCHA-TA I, Tcha-ta, was his friend. People do not sing this
song-for, oh, the tears it brings. Near how many
campfires I have sung with him and talked long hours
away. Do not sing this song. For he is slain and the
eagle that broods is now him, and he will watch the
hills all day, and night|time sit in the very high cedar.
Pity me-do not sing this song anymore.

CHORUS CONTINUES TO CHANT BG

TCHA-TA All the night spirits throng on us, do you hear? Ah-Ah!
What pain! It sears deep like the fire to leave us
only with ashes.
Why do you sing? It will not bring him home. He is
eagle-like above our fires and the smoke smarts his
eyes-and he cannot see us for his tears drown our fires.
Let us return, now.

CHORUS OUT

MUSIC BRIDGE TO

NARRATOR And the rain fell on the fires, and the Chief in the rolling, deep wood, lay among branches, with his eyes wounded by stars. And the people of Ium-a-Tzwa sank through the forest glade to their seaside lodges.. Meeriluk was dead, and the fire birds banked in the night above the wind dipped waves--Yaga, they shrieked, and the four winds went wild. Yaga!-they cried between the hills, all night long through the flickering shades.

SOUND WIND AND STORM UP. DOWN THROUGH DRUMS VERY FAINT AND MUFFLED TALKING TO ONE ANOTHER. HOLD.

NARRATOR It began in a summer rain-in the warm wet of June one day when Meeriluk returned late from the fishing...

MEERILUK Yaga, I am wet. Bank up the fire.

YAGA But I was waiting for you. The fire is already banked up.

MEERILUK Bring me my robe.

YAGA I have it ready. Here, sir. And there is food also.

MEERILUK You are quick, Yaga?

YAGA Yes, sir, for you.

MEERILUK For anyone else, Yaga?

YAGA Not as quick, sir.

MEERILUK Even for my father, the chief?

YAGA Oh, yes, for him.

MEERILUK (ENJOYING HIMSELF) As quick as for me? Eh, Yaga?

YAGA I do not like to answer.

MEERILUK But you must answer. Who are you quicker for-me or my father?

YAGA For you, sir.

MEERILUK I should beat you for that.

YAGA Yes, sir.

MEERILUK You like to wait on me, Yaga?

YAGA You know that I do, sir.

MEERILUK More than for anyone-even for my father--the chief?

YAGA Yes, sir.

MEERILUK You would do anything for me?

YAGA Yes.

MEERILUK Burn my father's lodge if I asked you to?

YAGA Do not ask such a thing!

MEERILUK Kill him while he was sleeping--if I asked you?

YAGA You mock me, I am sure.

MEERILUK Come now. You've got to answer me.

YAGA But you must not ask me.

MEERILUK But I want to know, Yaga.

YAGA Your father would kill me even for listening to you.

MEERILUK Yes, he would. Well? Come now, Yaga.

YAGA I would kill and burn for you.

MEERILUK My father, the chief...you would kill him if I asked you?

YAGA Yes. (SHE BREAKS INTO A WAIL) Oh what have you made me say? I will be killed..I will be killed now! You will tell him and I will be killed! What have I done! Evil...evil!

MEERILUK Stop it, yaga. You're only a dirty slave and I'm not interested in having you killed.

YAGA But you will have me killed if you please. You hate me. I am nothing but a slave to you...

MEERILUK That's true. But I do not hate you--

YAGA Do you not?

MEERILUK No.

YAGA You always called me filthy and ugly. You used to kick me whenever I got in the way. Do you like me really?

MEERILUK That's not for you to ask.

YAGA But I'm ugly.

MEERILUK You used to be, it's true.

YAGA A man told me that I was beautiful.

MEERILUK A man? What man?

YAGA I can't tell you.

MEERILUK Of course you will tell me! Who was it?

YAGA He is a friend of yours. I dare not.

MEERILUK What did he do? Did he...touch you?

YAGA Please...sir...please...do not ask.

MEERILUK You little wretch. Tell me! Or I shall break your arm!

YAGA (IN PAIN) Please....I would be no good to you then, sir.

MEERILUK (SHOCKED) Yaga....(AND SOFTLY) Yaga.....

SOUND THE MUFFLED DRUM AGAIN. HOLD BG.

NARRATOR And though he was Prince Meeriluk, and wore the bear claws at his throat, and walked with high disdain among the people still that summer he was a slave to a slave. For her eyes were like the night...and what dark passages the night has, what birds passing, and stars, and stars, and moon shimmerings, and winds shifting over leaves' whispering for miles and miles, unseen, drifting miles over the hills of the moontime...and what can we do against the magic of the night?--that first night of first love?...in the fainting dark?

NARRATOR But sometimes there stirred within her, together with her new found pride, a deep uneasiness.

YAGA I am not a slave, oh Meeriluk. I am beautiful, am I not--and was I not, a chief's daughter--and was not my mother Queen Da-mon-ah-tze, daughter of the Sea-king, Salusch?

MEERILUK Yaga...what does it matter?

YAGA It is true. I heard it from another slave who was taken with me. She was a woman and I a child at the time, and she told me the story often--when we crept together in the cold--often I asked her--who was I? Who was I?

MEERILUK It is not true, Yaga.

YAGA Ask your father if it is not so. Ask him. But I know it is true and that I have great powers.

MEERILUK Powers?

YAGA I have sometimes strange feelings. Even now. You see the moon coming from under the darkness, turning its full face on us. See it? And now the tide turns moving landward. I can feel the whole sea trembling. The sea wants to touch me turning my body white; it wants to ripple through my hair, pulling me out into the deeper currents where the sea-lions wander. There is one there whom I have seen in my dreams.

MEERILUK What thoughts you have! You are no queen! Nor was your mother one! You father was no chief but a slave like yourself.--What nonsense!

YAGA I have great powers, oh Meeriluk, for I am not entirely mortal.

MEERILUK I shall knock the stuffing out of you, Yaga, to see how immortal you are. Remember, you are my family's slave....

YAGA But you love me, Meeriluk.

MEERILUK Our love will not change you into a princess, my little one.

YAGA Let us go away together, Meeriluk. Let us start a new race where I shall be Queen.

MEERILUK Yaga, you must not talk that way.

YAGA I shall be queen.

MEERILUK Little she-wolf! Our love has made you great.

YAGA Meeriluk, do you love me?

MEERILUK Of course!

YAGA Has it not been--very good?

MEERILUK Of course it has.

YAGA You take our love lightly!

MEERILUK When you are angry there are little stars in your eyes
 that flash, and it amuses me to hear you talk of great-
 ness, my Queen!

YAGA How can you love me if you think of me only as a slave?

MEERILUK But you are a slave. I cannot help that.

YAGA (PROUDLY) Only in name am I slave. That is my mask.
 Beneath I am Queen, and my father was a chief, and my
 mother--

MEERILUK Was Queen to the sea-king!

YAGA Shall we go away, Meeriluk?

MEERILUK Whatever else you are you are mine now, Yaga. And
 that is not slavery.

YAGA Listen, hear how the waves sing to us. I am so happy,
 my Prince. I cannot think that you will ever leave me..

MEERILUK (DESPERATELY) I love you, Yaga. I love you.

YAGA Say it. Say: I will never leave you, Yaga.

MEERILUK Yaga.....

YAGA Say it.

MEERILUK I shall never leave you, Yaga.

CHORUS CHANTING HAPPILY

NARRATOR The summer was good to the people of Mum-a-Tzwa-the
 berries falling from the hillsides rich and red, the

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salmon never failing, and the sun warm on the dipping paddles...

CHORUS CHANTING UP. FADE THROUGH..

NARRATOR Weeks passed, a month, and the chief, Kuth-kah-chulth, who was old beyond belief, called his son, Meeriluk, to him.

SOUND DRUMS. AUTHORITATIVE. OUT.

CHIEF Son, you are very young, and you are also a fool.

MEERILUK Sir, why have you called me? To tell me this?

CHIEF I said you are a fool! In a word, that you have been seen with the slave girl, Yaga.

MEERILUK Sir, it is only that she is of the household...

CHIEF You have been seen with her in places other than the household.

MEERILUK Sometimes she follows me--to help me!

CHIEF It is helping, then, that leads to the beach at night. I am old but not yet blind--or deaf.--Well?

MEERILUK Sir--there is no harm.

CHIEF There is much harm! You are my son--and I am the greatest chief in this world--and you are to follow me. But not--assuredly not with a slave girl as wife.

MEERILUK Sir.....

CHIEF You would shame me in this way!? Better to be dead, I tell you, than to heap shame on me and my family!
(PAUSE) You will have nothing more to do with her.

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And to be sure I will banish her from my household.

There will be no more nonsense, do you hear?

MEERILUK (ANGRILY) I hear!

CHIEF Then go, and heed well.

MEERILUK I go.

CHIEF Meeriluk!

MEERILUK Sir!

CHIEF If I hear of anymore of this I shall have her immediately drowned.

MEERILUK Very well, sir. Goodbye!

CHIEF (AFTER A SHORT PAUSE) Fool of a son!

TCHA-TA Were you calling me, sir?

CHIEF No, not you, T'cha-Ta, if my son were like you I would not be calling him a fool.

TCHA-TA I would not call him a fool, sir. He is strong and true and he has shrewdness, too, despite his youth. I know, for I have taught him what he knows. He will make a great chief someday-almost as great as yourself oh Kuth-kah-chulth!

CHIEF If I thought so I would not worry. But he has his mother's blood in him, too. And she was headstrong beyond belief!

SOUND DRUMS HEAVY. OUT.

A FROG CROAKING DISTANTLY

MEERILUK (CALLING SOFTLY) Yaga! Yaga!

YAGA I am here, Meeriluk. Over here.

MEERILUK Sssh. (PAUSE) We are in very great danger.

YAGA I know.

MEERILUK How dare they tell me not to see you. They do not know me or they would not threaten Meeriluk.

YAGA Hush.

(PAUSE)

MEERILUK Oh Yaga!

YAGA I have no light without you, Meeriluk. I am without sun or moon when you are gone. I am without life without you, Meeriluk. Without warmth. And I think death would be better than to be without you..

MEERILUK There will be no dying, Yaga. We are going away.

YAGA (WITH HOPE IN HER VOICE) Away?...Where? When?

MEERILUK Now. Tonight. Every moment we stand here is perilous. They would threaten me?-I shall fool them. Quickly. My canoe is ready-packed with provisions for our journey. Come.

YAGA Wait.

MEERILUK No. Come.

YAGA It is for me, Meeriluk, it is for me you do this?

MEERILUK Of course it's for you: who else? Now-come--softly.

NARRATOR Quickly they moved down the beach to the cove where Meeriluk's canoe lay waiting. The paddles dipped into the soft wet night, encountered the water, and the boat moved..swifter, swifter they paddled until the night of the sea was all around them.

SOUND DRUMS SOFT AT FIRST

NARRATOR Not until morning was their flight discovered.

SOUND DRUMS GROWING TO:

CHIEF He does not know what he does. It is the work of that she-witch, Yaga. Why did I not drown her like a puppy when I found her? Oh evil! My only son! Oh! Oh! I am sure I am dying. I should have told him about her, I should have told him. Tcha-ta, you brought him up, do you know where he could have gone?

TCHA-TA I took him on many journeys. But there was one way we never went. I think that now he would go in that direction.

CHIEF Tcha-ta, you must follow him. Overtake him. Six of the strongest men. The fastest canoe. You must catch him.

TCHA-TA I am sure we can do it. He has two paddles only and a loaded canoe. We will overtake him.

CHIEF Tell him--tell him that I ^{lie} ~~lay~~ dying, that this time, I am certain to die.

TCHA-TA I will do it, sir.

CHIEF And Tcha-ta--bring her back!

SOUND HEAVY DRUMS FADED DOWN TO

NARRATOR All the night before Prince Meeriluk and Yaga had paddled and only as the night sky turned to gray had they stopped to rest and look around them....

YAGA I am tired.

MEERILUK We have come far.

YAGA Where are we?

MEERILUK I do not know. I have never been this way.

NARRATOR For awhile they watched in silence the night on the water lose its stars to the dawn. And Meeriluk thought of his father's rage and hurt when he discovered that his son had gone away. He was surprised to find that his own anger had left him. There was only the uncertainty left, and now, as the mists uncoiled from the heads of the hidden mountains a growing dread. The land was strange//where was he going?

MEERILUK Come, we must paddle.

YAGA Yes, my lord.

MEERILUK Harder, Yaga

NARRATOR He stared hard at his feet and bent his back to the paddle but as the day wore on and his muscles grew stiff with fatigue he began to think with regret of his home. Of the ceremonials, the Winter Dances, the laughter in the lodges when night had come and the fires were set, of the feasts, the great rugs, the familiar faces, of the huge and joyful potlatches which his father held--and finally of his birthright, his place at the head of the tribe, of the greatness that was to be his destiny.

MEERILUK (ROUGHLY) Keep paddling, Yaga, Keep paddling.

YAGA But I'm tired, Meeriluk.

MEERILUK We've got to keep paddling.

NARRATOR And bitterness filled his heart at the thought of what he had done, of what she had made him do! after all, it was only a passing affair, but she must take it so seriously as to think that he should give up everything for her! With shock he looked at her ahead of him, as if for the first time, as if he had never seen her before. He had been in love with her? But she was only a slave!

The strokes of his paddle slackened. He was filled with shame.

CHORUS DISTANT

NARRATOR In the late afternoon he turned around to see far behind him the flash of paddles rising into the sunlight. He was overjoyed. It was surely T'cha-ta come to take him home!

CHORUS OUT.

NARRATOR And with a feeling of cruelty he shouted at Yaga!

MEERILUK Faster, Yaga, faster!

YAGA I can go no faster, Yaga. My arms are heavy. My paddle trails in the water.

MEERILUK There's a canoe behind us, Yaga, Faster-faster.

YAGA It is as if the water had turned to mud, Meeriluk. And my arms are like sticks. I fear an evil spirit--

MEERILUK Faster-Yaga-faster. The canoe behind us draws closer.

YAGA Oh, evil, evil..I am trying-Meeriluk-but the canoe is like a stone and I cannot..I cannot...

NARRATOR And she turned imploringly towards him. But her lover was sitting with his paddle across his knees.....

SOUND DRUMS AND YELLING. HOLD BG

NARRATOR And so Prince Meeriluk came home and the village rejoiced to see him. They thronged around him as he walked towards his father's house, drawing himself up to his full height. All this would be his, and his heart exulted. And some distance behind, Yaga stumbled, in bonds, and the people spat and cuffed at her. "Water snake!" they screamed.

....This was the homecoming of Prince Meeriluk.

SOUND DRUMS. SOFTER BG

MEERILUK Father-

CHIEF (FALTERING IN HIS SPEECH NOW AND THEN) Yes, my son, you have come home. Ah. Ah. I knew you would see the foolishness of your ways. And have you not?

MEERILUK Yes, my father.

CHIEF It was only what we call a summer love-soon done with. You are well out of it.

MEERILUK I am glad to be home, father.

CHIEF Good words. Now where is the witch, Yaga?

TCHA-TA Here she is, sir. On your knees, witch! This is the chief before you.

YAGA Kill me! Kill me, oh Kuth-kah-chulth! I have no more

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use for life! Kill me! Quickly!

CHIEF As you ask, it shall be done, witch. Tcha-ta, take her out and drown her. It will be well to get rid of her.

TCHA-TA At once, my lord.

MEERILUK Sir--wait. She is harmless. Send her out from the tribe--

CHIEF My son--

MEERILUK No, father, I have no more use for her--but her crime is not so great that she deserves death--turn her loose in the forest. We will never see her again.

CHIEF Meeriluk--I never told you before--I should have done so. This girl I captured from the tribe of Klee-a-wait-en, who live far south of here. Her father was a chief and her mother--her mother was not entirely mortal having consorted with the sea king--Sal-usch. Do you understand, my son? That must be done which I failed miserably to do then--because she was only a little child and seemed quite harmless. But she has great powers--she is a witch, Meeriluk--and let us kill her quickly or else there is no telling what evil she may perform..Oh, Oh!

MEERILUK Father--father, what is it?

CHIEF My time has come--as I foretold. Meeriluk--you are chief now...My son --only--only do this--kill the witch, Yaga..Then, you will be of all...the greatest chief... Kill the...witch....(HE DIES)

MEERILUK My father...dead. Great Kuth-kah-chulth---dead!

SOUND A SHAMAN'S RATTLE BEING SHAKEN. HEAVY SLOW BEAT.

CHORUS INDIAN FUNERAL DIRGE

SOUND DRUMS. DECISIVE. HOLD BG.

NARRATOR The Prince was now Chief Meeriluk--leader of the people of Yum-a-Tzwa----the greatest tribe on that coast. And he put away his youth and took upon himself the gravest dignity. First of all, he called the slave girl Yaga to come before him....

MEERILUK Yaga--you have heard what my father pronounced? He commanded me to have you killed.

YAGA Well, do it then. I have no use for life. Kill me--- oh great Meeriluk--I advise you to do so.

MEERILUK But I am chief now, and I have decided that you shall not be killed. You shall be banished from the tribe and you shall never dare to come near us again. Do you hear, Yaga?

YAGA Oh, Meeriluk...Meeriluk--in three days my youth has faded like the summer sun. Sorrow streaks my hair. Horror has bent my back that I may not look on man again. Terror has withered my heart so that I may not love. I am made an old woman, great chief, and you would be better to kill me.

MEERILUK You have heard my pronouncement.

YAGA You did not hear mine. When I ^{said} ~~said~~ that I would rather be dead than live without you, you heard it only with your ears. When you whispered that you loved me, when you promised never to leave me, your words meant nothing to you, you did not hear them.

MEERILUK You were only a slave!

YAGA I am the daughter of a queen, treacherously taken. My father was chief of the Klee-a-wait-en.

MEERILUK You are a slave now, less than a slave!

YAGA I have greatness in my veins. My mother speaks to me from among the dead. She gives me strange powers. I have raised the spirits. I have talked to Quawteatl.

MEERILUK Do you think that you frighten me with you words, daughter of dirt? Go! I have seen enough of you. Take her to the edge of the village, tcha-ta, and turn her loose among the trees.

TCHA-TA Oh, Meeriluk, I do not like her looks. Kill her as your father asked, and as she herself desires.

MEERILUK I have made my pronouncement. Obey me, Tcha-ta!

TCHA-TA It will be done, my lord. Come, witch!

SOUND RAPID DRUMS. DOWN BG AND SLOWER

NARRATOR The summer had turned to Fall. Chief Meeriluk took to himself a bride from among the beauties of the tribe, and held a great potlatch, at which he distinguished himself beyond all others. For no one could compete with him in wealth and he gave more gifts than the rest combined. In that country he was acclaimed the greatest chief of all, and honour and wealth flowed in upon him.

SOUND DRUMS RAPID. BECOME HEAVIER, SLOWER...AT INTERVALS DURING THE FOLLOWING WE HEAR A SHAMAN'S RATTLE.

NARRATOR But deep into the forest Yaga wandered. Arrayed in cedar bark, with wild roots for food, she clambered the black hills and suffered U-ah-tie, the north wind, and crouching in caverns spent long hours talking to the Bhe-haha, bleak spirits of the nether world...It is said that from them she learnt to change herself at will into a bear, a wolf, a crow, a raven, a whale, a frog, anything at all....She had become a demon-woman.

SOUND DRUMS REACH A RATTLING CLIMAX AND THEN OUT

NARRATOR In the middle of the winter she came to live in a cave along the rocky shore not far from the village of Yum-a-tzwa. And at night, in the middle of their festivities, the people were amazed to hear the rumble of voices as if thunder were rolling along the shore quite close to them. They knew that it was the great beings who talked to Yaga. And they were most afraid.....

TCHA-TA Chief Meeriluk!----Hear me!

MEERILUK Yes, Tcha-ta.

TCHA-TA Last night again the thunder rolled along the rocks beside us. And some say they saw in the lightning flash the wings of Quawteatl....

MEERILUK Well....what of this?

TCHA-TA Yaga, the witch, threatens us, and at all costs, we must destroy her.

MEERILUK (WITH A SNEER) Yaga has no special powers. The only power she once had was the bewitchment of her beauty.

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For the rest--she is only a woman--prattling the usual nonsense.

TCHA-TA My Chief, it is not so. Your father spoke the truth when he said.....

MEERILUK My father liked to put an edge on everything he said. It gave his deeds a brighter burnish.

TCHA-TA I am an old man and have seen much, oh Meeriluk, and I have come out at this end of life with the thought that since anything is possible, it is better to be careful than dust.

MEERILUK Old man, such thoughts are for the aged.

TCHA-TA Yes, and for those in danger, the nearly dead.
(PAUSE)

MEERILUK What does she want with us?

TCHA-TA Your death.

MEERILUK How does she intend to manage it?

TCHA-TA By magic.

MEERILUK When?

TCHA-TA At any time.

MEERILUK And so you think I live at her command--and die at her command?---

TCHA-TA But there is no shame in this, Meeriluk--she is a demon and works by---

MEERILUK Old man, she has fooled you all! I am Meeriluk! My powers are greater than all the chiefs of this world combined, and I scorn the demons of the other.

TCHA-TA Oh, Meeriluk--you mistake your powers--

MEERILUK Has yaga been seen?

TCHA-TA Yes--on the farthest point of land, etched against the sea we saw her--until the clouds dropped around her. ^{We}~~WE~~ heard her laughter.

MEERILUK She will die! She will die tonight!

TCHA-TA Good. Good. I will send a party of warriors to kill her at once.

MEERILUK No! You will not!

TCHA-TA But how...what are you doing Meeriluk? Why do you arm yourself?

MEERILUK She shall die by my hand, no other. She is a filthy slave who has presumed to disobey me, to insult me, to pretend to powers beyond mine. She shall die!

TCHA-TA (DUMBFOUNDED) Meeriluk--no--you cannot. She is dangerous. No single man dare risk it. (PAUSE) Meeriluk --listen to me, an old man who brought you through this world, who sees beyond what the years have told him-- wait. The sun fades to purple on the far rim of the world. There is death in the darkness. Wait--until morning at least.

MEERILUK You will see, old man, that your fears are groundless. Her lies I will uncover in her death. Soon, I'll fling her bloody body on our fires. Build them high.

TCHA-TA Oh--oh--oh.....

The weasel dark sniffs at the bay--blows out the light...

Oh, Meeriluk--your life goes with it into darkness....

SOUND DRUMS HIGH AND THEN VERY FAINT BG

NARRATOR They heard the crunch of his feet on the gravel beach and then only the surge of the long waves hitting the edge of the night.

And they built their fires high and waited.

And the flames leapt in the sweep of winds that had known^a thousand miles of ocean. And they crouched close to their fires and waited, hearing only the crash of trees in the howling glades. Waited until the wind had died and dawn rose silent in the treeless regions of the night, rose pale, over the gulf of the wingless sea...

Then Tcha-ta gathered his men and followed the beach to the cliff shore and climbed around to the farthest point of land, which, like a finger, pointed to the mists that lay banked over the islands beyond....At the tip of the point they found them--Meeriluk, without wounds lay dead on the stone lap of the woman, Yaga, his face in the pool of her tears...To this day they call it--The Weeping Rock.

CHORUS CHANTING THE STORY AND

SOUND MUFFLED DISTANT DRUMS TO END.
