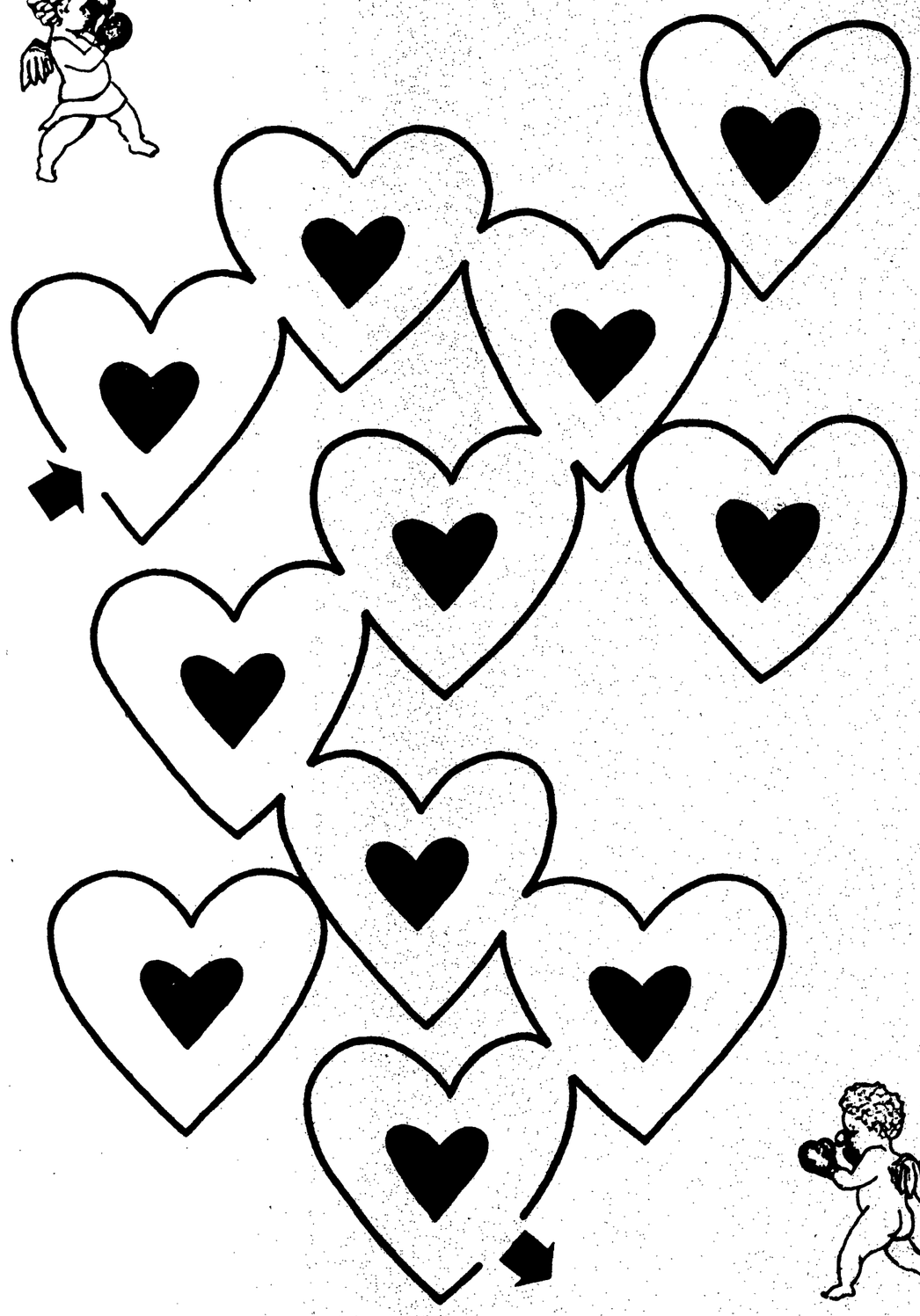
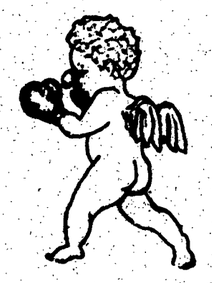
Kids' Page





The Buffalo Clan at Onondaga
Hai yebn-twas stories

"There was a family that belonged to the Buffalo Clan. They wore heavy, brown, fur robes. There was a time when their numbers were many, the Buffalo Clan was the strongest and proudest of all the Clans. Their territory stretched as far as the eye could see. Now they couldn't think of another family besides theirs that was left. The once proud and strong Buffalo Clan now lived behind a fence.

Life behind the fence wasn't all bad. Food was plentiful and water was nearby. Their homes were comfortable. Sweet, green milkweeds appeared in the spring to eat, along with ripe, red strawberries. Whatever else the Clan needed their Onondaga brothers would share with them, this was the way of the Peacemaker. Still, there were those who remembered when the Buffalo roamed the country as far as an eagle's eye could see.

The women of the Buffalo Clan got restless in the spring. Many were pregnant and wished to find new homes for their growing families.

'It's too crowded here,' 'Let's find some fresh water.' 'Let's find some new, green fields,' the Buffalo women whispered to their husbands at night. At first, the men of the Buffalo Clan would not listen.

'No, we can't go through the fence. It was put there to protect us from the people of the No Clan. If we leave here we will be killed, like the others who have dissappeared before us.'

The women would cease their whispering. For that night.

But as spring warmed up and the women grew heavier, the whispering began again and then increased. Soon the men's minds grew clouded. They forgot their own warnings.

'Why do we have to stay behind the fence?' they asked each other, 'Do we not belong to the Buffalo Clan? The strongest and oldest of all the Clans?' The whisperings went on.

One women who was known to be extremely strong-willed, one day, gathered her robes together and broke through the fence. That ended the whisperings and all debates.

'Follow me,' she called, 'We are free!'

The men of the Buffalo Clan laugbed and said, 'Woman, you are brave and strong, but we shall lead.'

With a great deal of laughter and joy, some of the Buffalo Clan gathered their robes together and with one look over their shoulders, they went through the opening to freedom. (And into the land of No Clan.)

Not all left the fence, of course, some stayed in the homelands. There would always be some who stayed in the homelands.

'Our home is here. There is nothing left for us out there, except death. Stay here.' The older wiser Buffalo counseled the younger ones. But the young always hear voices that no one else hears and those voices that called were stronger and clearer to them.

'No, Grandfather, Look! I can see green fields down there in the valley. Let's go down there. What harm can it do? It's not far outside the fence. Those apple blossoms are sweet and delicate. The Creator provided them for us.'

'Young Ones, the men of the No Clan do not thank the Creator. He has forgotten how. He does not hear Mother Earth's song of life and creation. He hears the song of death and destruction. He is bent on destroying us all.'

The young warriors could not, would not listen.

The thunder of the Buffalo on the move roared through the valley and the smell of the apple blossoms grew stronger and stronger. The Buffalo men smiled and gave thanks to the Creator. The women gave cries as if winning in the peachstone game and they too, gave thanks. The children, who had never seen so many apple blossoms in one place, had a hard time stopping to give thanks, but they did. Nor did the Buffalo Clan eat everything they saw, but passed the first blossoms, as this too, is the way of the Peacemaker. When all customs were observed, the Buffalo Clan ate. And ate.

Suddenly there was thunder. Not the natural kind that the Buffalo made when they were on the move, not the natural kind of the horse brother's hooves as they struck the Earth, not the natural kind of Thunder People of the western skies; but an unnatural kind, a sharp, cracking kind, a deathful kind. The strong-willed Buffalo woman fell to her knees.

'A powerful bee has stung me!' She fell over. Her boy, Tioneratoken, rushed over and cried, 'Mama, Mama, get up!' She did not hear him. The other women of the Clan urged her to get up. She did not move. Her spirit had departed. The Buffalo men looked at her and saw the mark the bee had left; it was a small hole, not large about the size of an apple blossom. Dark, rich blood fell on the ground at her boy's feet. 'What kind of bee did this?' everyone wondered.

Again the unnatural thunder rang out, short and sharp to the ears. Another Buffalo woman, fat with child, fell to the ground. Then men looked to the skies, but the women looked to the bushes where the noise came from. There, crouched, hiding was a man of the No Clan.

'Stop sending your bees,' the Buffalo women demanded.

The man of No Clan could not hear or understand them. He sent another bee to sting yet another woman who was with child. She too, fell down and her spirit departed.

Things began to look desperate. 'This man does not understand us. How can we stop him from sending his bees? We must stop him from killing our people.' The chief Warrior whose duty it is to protect the Clan, rushed toward the man crouched in the bushes. The killing bees rushed out and stung him.

The Warriors began singing the songs that they learned when they found their purpose in life; it was also their death song. Their voices joined together, each song different, yet some how the same. Their voices were carried up to the Creator by the Wind who took pity on the Buffalo Clan.

'Carry these songs to the men of Onondaga,' the Wind was told.

The men from Onondaga were searching for their brothers, the Buffalo. They were about to turn back, when they heard the songs of the Buffalo carried by the Wind. They followed the Wind back to the place of death.

With extreme dismay, the men from Onondaga saw the bodies of the Buffalo whose spirits had departed. They were about to ask the Buffalo to return home when one young warrior rushed toward the bushes. A sharp crack rang out and the young Buffalo fell. Mother Earth held out her arms and welcomed the brave young warrior home. The Onondagas saw the man from No Clan hiding in the bushes with his gun.

'Stop shooting the Buffalo!' they demanded.

'They attached me,' he answered back,' I'll kill them all.'

'Stop shooting and we'll tell them to go home.'

The man from No Clan laughed. 'You talk to these dumb animals?' hah! You ain't never going to get them home. The only thing they understand is this.' He held up his gun and shook it.

The men of Onondaga had patience, this, also, is the Peacemaker's way. They turned their backs on the man from No Clan. They knew he would not understand having dealt with him for two hundred years already.

'Go home, brothers. Go home to your Grandfathers. They are waiting to welcome you back. There is nothing for you here, but death. Go back.'

'What you say is right. Onondaga brothers. We already have many mourning songs to sing. We have many motherless children, now. This man of No Clan does not understand us. We will go home.' They, too, turned their backs on the man of No Clan and went home. They did not see his eyes bug out in wonder. They did not see him standing there speechless. Their hearts were too full of sorrow, their eyes too full of tears, their ears too full of mourning songs.

The Buffalo went back to their homeland. When they reached the fence, they found the spot the stronged-willed woman had knocked down. There was the Old Grandfather Chief waiting, 'Welcome back, young ones.'

One by one, the people began jumping through the fence, the children, the women and the warriors, until all that was left was the young motherless boy, Tioneratoken. Tioneratoken was too young to jump through the fence without the help his mother would have given him. He ran up and down the fence looking for a spot to jump through. No luck, he couldn't find an opening. All the people on the other side of the fence stood gently giving encouragement, gently giving advice. Try as he might, he could not find a way into the fence. He stood looking disparagingly at his people so far away and yet there they were, just on the other side of the fence. His heart filled with despair, he was about to cry, when suddenly he was airborne, flying over the fence. He landed on the otherside, unhurt, but extremely puzzled. At first, he thought that the Creator had seen his dilemma and had given him wings, but then he heard the deep grumbling laugh of the old Grandfather Chief.

'I threw you over.'

The grandfather Chief jumped over the fence and the Buffalo people were home again.'

Hai yebn-twas was sitting by the stove holding his young son Cha deyb-beyt in his arms. His wife, Kim had just come home from the hospital where she was a first year resident. She looked tired. "He's asleep." Hai yebn-twas whispered.

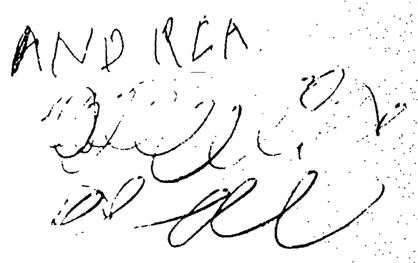
"What did you do, tell him one of your stories?" Kim smiled as she sipped some cold coffee.

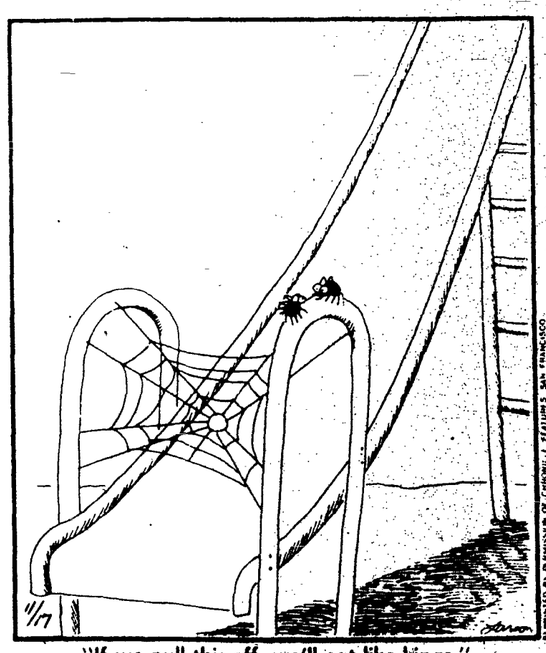
"Yeah, I was just telling him about how we brought the Buffalo home the last time they left the fence. Remember that? A couple of years ago?"

"They gave you guys a good chase. Too bad that White guy had to shoot those females. How did you men get them to come back anyway?"

Cha deyb-beyt's eyes popped open and he said, "They just asked them to come home and they did. huh, pa, huh?" "Yeah, you're right. Is everyone ready for bed?" Kim nodded and the three of them went upstairs to bed.

Nancy Johnson
January 24, 1985





"If we pull this off, we'll eat like kings."

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'VALENTINE WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words:

Sweetheart
Sugar-n-Spice
Be Mine
Cupid
Hugs
Chocolates
Valentine
I Like You
You're Cute
February
Kisses
Roses
I Love You

HOW MANY 4 LETTER WORDS CAN YOU FIND IN THE WORD

VALENTINE