

Joseph, Campbell. *The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers*. Edited by Betty Sue Flowers, New York: Doubleday, 1988, pp. 76-78

This story is of a Blackfoot tribe, long, long ago, who couldn't get the buffalo to go over the cliff. The buffalo would approach the cliff and then turn aside. So it looked as though the tribe wasn't going to have any meat for that winter.

One day, the daughter of one of the houses got up early in the morning to draw the water for the family and happened to look up to the cliff. There on the cliff were the buffalo. And she said, 'Oh, if you would only come over, I would marry one of you.'

To her surprise, they all began coming over. Now, that was surprise number one. Surprise number two was when one of the old buffalo, the shaman of herd, comes and says, 'All right, girlie, off we go.'

'Oh, no' she says.

'Oh, yes,' he says, 'you made your promise. We've kept our side of the bargain. Look at all my relatives here—dead. Now off we go.'

Well, the family gets up in the morning and they look around, and where is Minnehaha? The father looks around on the ground—you know how Indians are, he can see by the footprints— and he says, 'She's gone off with a buffalo. And I am going to get her back.' So he puts on his walking moccasins, his bow and arrow, and so forth, and goes out over the plains. He has gone quite a distance when he feels he better sit down and rest. So he sits down, and he is thinking about what he should do now, when along come the magpie, one of those clever birds that has magical qualities.

And the Indian says to him, 'O beautiful bird, did my daughter run away with a buffalo? Have you seen her? Would you hunt around and see if you can find her out on the plains somewhere?'

And the magpie says, 'Well, there is a lovely girl with the buffalo right now, over there, just a bit away.'

'Well', says the man, 'will you go tell her that her daddy is here at the buffalo wallow?'

So the magpie flies over and finds the girl who is there among the buffalo. They're all asleep, and she is knitting or something of the kind. And the magpies comes over, and he says, 'Your father is over at the wallow waiting for you.'

'Oh', she says, 'this is terrible. This is very dangerous. These buffalo are going to kill us. You tell him to wait, and I'll be over. I'll try to work this out.'

Now, her buffalo husband is behind her, and he wakes up and takes off his horn, and says, 'Go to the wallow and get me a drink.'

So she takes the horn and goes over, and there is her father. He grabs her by the arm and says, 'Come!'

But she says, 'No, no, no! This is real danger. The whole herd will be right after us. I have to work this thing out. Now, let me just go back.'

So she gets the water and goes back. And the buffalo says, 'Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Indian' —you know, that sort of thing. And she says, no, nothing of the kind. And he says, 'Yes indeed!' And he gives a buffalo bellow, and all the buffalo get up. And they all do a slow buffalo dance with tails raised, and they go over, and they trample that poor man to death, so that he disappears entirely. He is just all broken up to pieces. All gone. The girl is crying, and her buffalo husband says, 'So you are crying.'

'Yes', she says, 'he is my daddy.'

'Well' he says, 'but what about us?' There are our children, at the bottom of the cliff, our wives, our parents—and you cry about your daddy.'

Well, apparently he was a kind of compassionate buffalo, and he said, 'Okay, if you can bring your daddy back to life again, I will let you go.'

So she turns to the magpie and says, 'Please pick around a little bit and see if you can find a bit of Daddy.' And the magpie does so, and he comes up finally with a vertebra, just one little bone. And the girl says, 'That's enough.' And she puts the bone down on the ground and covers it with her blanket and sings a revivifying song, a magical song with great power. And presently—yes, there is a man under the blanket. She looks. 'That's Daddy all right!' But he is not breathing yet. She sings a few more stanzas of whatever the song was, and he stands up.

The buffalo are amazed. And they say, 'Well, why don't you do this for us?'

We'll teach you our buffalo dance, and when you will have killed our families, you do this dance and sing this song, and will all come back to life again.'