

Wanhulta (thus her name) to stray
 Into the forest went one day,
 And as she sat beside a brook,
 In its clear mirror chanced to look,
 When lo! she saw reflected there
 The image of a youth most fair,
 Whose golden hair and pallid face
 Proclaimed him of the white man's race.
 Silent he stood in deference meet
 To her who tarried at his feet,
 All signs forbearing (save to stare)
 That had betrayed his presence there.
 A while she sat in mute amaze
 On his reflection there to gaze,
 Ere, roused from reverie, did she start
 With strange emotion in her heart-
 A feeling like a current strong
 That bore resolve its course along
 And canceled by new rapture gained
 What of Ghewahtok's love remained.
 Whereat and instant she arose
 As one its ecstasy who knows
 And senses inwardly the source
 Whence true love wends its wilful course.
 Some words there were of timely ruse,
 Such young and flustered lovers use,
 Which, spoken, leave in after-stead
 No memory of what was said-
 A language terse, yet apt and bland,
 Which only love may understand.

Albeit watchful eyes were set
 Upon their love, the lover's met;
 For whose the eye endued to trace
 The feet of love from place to place?
 And where the shaman who could guess
 Its hiding in the wilderness?
 Moons waxed and waned and still the twain
 To do their heart's sweet will were fain,
 And often while her people slept
 Thence from the fire Wanhulta crept
 Her lover in the night to meet
 And know his kisses berry-sweet.

Time flew on eagle wings; the days
 Grew dim with autumn's amber haze,
 As southward through the azure sky
 The honking geese were seen to fly.
 The paw-paw bulged with yellow mell,
 And from the oak the acorn fell,
 And the wild grape, ripening on the vine,
 Told of the austral sun's decline.

One day Ghewahtok, hunting, came
 Across the hills in search of game,
 When at a streamlet's grassy brink
 He saw a stranger stoop to drink.
 He stole anigh, by caution led,
 But paused ere "Itah"* could be said;
 For the man was white and therefore he
 Was deemed a mortal enemy.
 He drew his knife; the other, too,
 A longer and a sharper drew;
 But strength prevailed; though he fought well,
 At last the stranger gasped and fell.
 Ghewahtok eyed him lying there
 While the red blood hue'd his golden hair,
 And thought: "My work so featly done,
 The long-knives# shall be less by one."

Then straightway to Wanhulta's tent,
 Vainglorious and bold he went.
 "Behold! another knave is dead.
 Here is his scalp." These words he said.

Wanhulta heard but did not speak;
 A death-like pallor blanched her cheek;
 For thus her heart the cold words found
 And deeply dealt with their deadly wound.
 She gazed upon that golden hair,
 With blood imbrued before her there,
 And with one look of withering hate
 Withdrew without the tent and sate.

Though keen the blade of mortal woe,
 As they who feel its sharp edge know,
 Yet keener grinds its edge the stone
 Of misery that bides alone;
 For whoso grief with friend may share
 Has halved the burden of his care,
 But doomed alone with grief to bide,
 Doubled the same shall him betide.
 And so Wanhulta: small relief
 She found, with none to share her grief,
 And shutting sorrow thus unnamed,
 Her heart with woe became inflamed.
 As one who by dire circumstance,
 Dumb and astound, moves in a trance;
 So in the toils of mortal anguish
 Henceforth was she doomed to languish.

Winter passed; came spring again
 with winds of March and April rain.
 The maple buds began to swell;
 The wadwah* raised its golden bell,
 And in the river's crystal tide
 The sparkling shad was seen to glide.
 But in her heart, as in a vise,
 Harsh winter with its snow and ice
 Still held Wanhulta in a grip
 That baffled plaint of tongue or lip;
 Till, numb with woe and hopeless, care
 Attained the zero of despair.

One summer eve (to seek relief
 From the keen torture of her grief)
 She walked abroad until she came
 To that high cliff of tragic fame,
 And stepping lightly to its edge
 Sat down to ponder on a ledge.
 Above her in the azure sky
 She saw the white clouds scud and fly,
 And wished that she, as they, might find
 Peace in communion with the wind.

She looked below where, dark and deep,
 The angry waters swirl and leap,
 And thought how well her pain were done
 If smothered in oblivion.
 And as she sat and pondered there,
 Suddenly she seemed aware
 Of something dire and sinister
 Whose evil power threatened her.
 Instinctively she turned her head
 And a frantic chill of fear and dread
 Swept over her, for at her side-
 A fiend of rage and wounded pride-
 Ghewahtok stood. Within his eye
 The rabid fire of jealousy
 Yet burned, and when at last he spoke,
 The pent-up tide of hatred broke
 The dam of thought. "Love me or die!"
 He roared....The far hills heard his cry
 And answered it, but not so well
 As she who said: "Love you? Not hell
 Would pit a monster like you.
 'Twill naught avail to plead or sue,
 For rather would I grasp the snake
 Whose mottled coils a rattle shake
 Than favor you. Henceforth alone
 I'll bide. Ugh! murderer; begone!

As winds blown upward from the mouth
 Of torrid regions of the south
 In funneled shapes loud-thundering, roar
 Across the prairie's level floor,
 Blackening the sky that shinks aghast,
 As if it heard the judgement blast;
 So on his face his color grew,
 A presage terrible to view;
 As with frightful oath that rang
 From shore to shore, Ghewahtok sprang
 Toward Wanhulta. "Cozener!"
 He shouted hoarsely, seizing her:
 "Though twain while living, you and I
 Thus linked as one at least can die."
 So saying, he clasped her to his breast
 And on her lips one last kiss pressed
 And leaped....As from the zenith's height
 The falcon swoops in downward flight,
 So, locked in close embrace, they fell
 Down...down...down in death to dwell.
 And thenceforth to this very day
 Adepts far-seen in legend say
 A certain pine tree on a ledge,
 That juts out from the cliff's high edge,
 Some remnant of that tragedy
 Still keeps preserved in memory;
 For often when the west wind blows
 Its psalter strangely vocal grows
 And whispers forth from every rame'
 Ghewahtok's and Wanhulta's name.

* - The common greeting, or "How do you do?" of the Indians.

- The white men were called "long knives" by the Indians.

* - The Indian name of an unidentified flower - possibly the dandelion of the butter-cup.



Drawing by Ramona Sell