

Sun-Earth Day Podcast Maiden (Story Telling by Jordan Hill)

[Voice of Troy Cline]

The ancient art of storytelling has been used by almost every culture as a way to teach, explain or to instill knowledge. It is also an amazing way to peak the imagination through words, images and sounds.

In today's podcast, you will experience this ancient art through voice of Jordan Hill.

As a professional storyteller, Jordan Hill focuses especially on magical tales of wonder and awe. Early in his career he discovered that one of the best sources for such tales lay in the numerous stories that humans have woven about celestial phenomena, whether they be legends about the origins of a certain constellation, myths describing a total solar eclipse, or fairy tales based on the aurora borealis.

Jordan retells these traditional stories with the intention of tapping into the deep wisdom contained within them while kindling in listeners some of the same wonder felt when directly experiencing the natural phenomena themselves.

[Voice of Jordan Hill - Telling the story of the Maiden of the Northern Lights]

Once upon a time, there lived a beautiful maiden by the name of Linda. Linda was the daughter of Uko, guardian of the winds, and because of her lineage it was her duty to tend to the birds of the world, and to make sure that not only were they cared for, but that they were guided along the pathways to the skies, especially when they were migrating during the spring and the fall time. Some said that her beauty was rooted in her intense joy, her joy in living, but especially in her joy in her duty towards the birds. Because she was so beautiful she had many, many suitors who were asking for her hand in marriage.

And so it is that one day a chariot being pulled by 6 brown horses was seen coming out of the sky. And in the Chariot sat none other than the pole star himself. And the pole star descended to the earth in front of Linda and he presented her with 10 beautiful gifts; and he asked for her hand in marriage. But Linda, she shook her head and she said, "Pole star, you only stay in one place in the sky. I can not marry someone who cannot move around. I'm sorry, but you are not the husband for me". And so the pole star got back in the chariot and with his six brown horses he rode back up into the sky.

Shortly thereafter, 10 brown horses pulling a silver chariot were seen descending the heavens. And in the chariot sat the Moon. And the Moon landed before Linda and he presented her with 20 beautiful gifts. And he asked for her hand in marriage. But Linda shook her head and she said, "I'm sorry Moon, although I respect that you are constantly changing your appearance, I can not marry a man that only walks a single path across the sky. You are not the husband for me". And so the Moon got back in his silver chariot and he rode back up into the sky.

Not long after that, a chariot descended from the sky, a golden chariot pulled by 20 red-gold horses. And in it, sat the Sun himself. And he landed in front of Linda and he presented her with 30 gifts and he said, "Linda, will you be my bride?" But Linda shook her head and she said, "You, like the Moon, you only tread a single course across the sky. I'm sorry, but a man who can only walk one path is not the man for me". And so the Sun got back in his golden chariot and he rode off across the sky and finally setting across the western horizon.

It became darker and darker, getting darker throughout the night all the way until midnight; what was supposed to be the darkest hour of all. But instead, suddenly a strange glow filled the sky and a flickering began emerging from the north. Linda noticed this. She turned her eyes towards the heavens and what she saw took her breath away. For there in the sky came thundering 1000 silver horses, and pulling behind them, a diamond chariot, in which sat the Northern Lights. He came flashing and dancing through the sky all the way to where Linda was waiting for him. And he presented to her with all manner of gifts. Precious stones, beautiful gems, diamonds, rubies and metals. But he didn't even have to, for Linda was already taken with him. She ran up to him and she said, "Northern Lights, you flash across the sky where you want, you stop where you will, and you are always changing the way you look. Northern Lights, you are the husband for me".

And so they rejoiced in their betrothal together and they were so happy. But after a bit of time the Northern Lights said, "Linda I must return to the far north for I have business to take care of. While I'm gone, you prepare your wedding gown and veil and I will return for you. And then we will be married and you will join me there in the far northern lands. And so, he got back into his diamond chariot and with his silver horses he shot back up into the sky, flickering away towards to the north.

After this, Linda's joy was even more than before. Her eyes sparkled and her skin glowed as she went about preparing her white wedding gown and her white wedding veil. And taking care of everything else she needed to before her wedding. But though she was so happy, there were many who were not. The Sun, the pole star and the Moon, they looked down upon all of this in sadness and in envy of the Northern Lights. But not just them, for all the birds of the world heard that their beloved Linda would be leaving them, would be going off towards the north. In fact, it seemed as though she had already left them. She was so pre-occupied with her wedding preparations that she had forgotten about her duty towards the birds. And so when the fall came there was no one guiding them across the sky paths and many of them lost their way and were in chaos. But although Linda didn't notice this, as the days wore on she did notice that the Northern Lights weren't returning. And the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months. Linda began to despair. Where was he? Had he forgotten about her? Did he not love her anymore? Did he change his mind about marrying her?

Well, when the spring time came and the birds again were lost, trying to make their way without help along the sky paths. Then the light of joy went out in Linda's heart. She put on her white wedding dress, she put on her white wedding veil. She went running out to the meadow by the streams, and there she lay down and she began to sob. She cried and

she cried and she cried. And as she wept, the birds, although they had been left alone by Linda they couldn't help but feel sympathy for her. And so they came flying down next to her, and they fluttered their feathers towards her skin trying to cheer her up, singing her a beautiful bird song. But it didn't help. All Linda could think about was her lost love, the Northern Lights.

Well eventually her father Uko, guardian of the winds, came to know of what was going on. And he decided that with his winds he could be of help. And so he sent some of his breezes to settle right down next to Linda. Gently they picked her up. And with the help of the birds they carried her up into the sky, higher and higher, up into the clouds. And once she got up there into the heavens, then the Northern Lights noticed her. He had been so busy with all of his work that he had gotten lost with his duty and had forgotten to return for her. But when he saw her again, oh, well then he remembered how beautiful she was. He got back in his chariot and he shot across the sky and he went up to her, as if nothing had happened. And he said, "Linda, I see that you are wedding for our wedding for you are wearing your gown. Come, come with me towards the northland and we will be married.

Well Linda, she was so overjoyed to see her beloved once more that she had forgot all about those months of waiting, those weeks of despair. She stepped into his chariot happily.

But just before they were going to leave, she looked down, and there below her in the skies she noticed a few birds who were flying where they shouldn't be. And then she looked around some more and sure enough, there were many birds who were off the sky paths. And when she saw this, suddenly, she remembered. She remembered her duty to the birds, her duty to herself that she had not been fulfilling. And she remembered how even though she had left the birds alone, they had been there for her when she was sorrowful, trying to cheer her up.

They had been there for her lifting her up into the sky at their own expense. Well as she thought of all of this her heart turned inside of her. She stepped out of the Northern Light's Chariot and she said to him, "I'm sorry, I can not come with you to the far north". The northern lights was confused and he said, "But Linda? I thought we were supposed to get married." And she said, "Yes! Yes! And I still do want to be married. Come, let us be married right here and right now. And afterwards you can go to the north and I will stay here. And we can visit each other whenever we want. But my place is here and my duty is to the birds, and to myself."

And so, the Northern Lights agreed. They were married right then and there! Amidst great flashing of lights across the sky and great rejoicing across the earth! And after they had spent some time together the Northern Lights got back into his diamond chariot and he returned to the north. And Linda, still wearing her white wedding gown and her white wedding veil, she lay down across the sky; forming an almost white billowy path. And with this path she was once more able to guide the birds across the skies, to help them in their yearly migrations.

And so it is that Linda is still up there, the Milky Way, we call her; and she is still guiding the birds. She faces towards the north and she waves to her husband. He comes flashing across the sky in all of his brilliant colors and the two of them are close together, heart to heart. But afterwards he returns to the north, and he does not take her with him. And well that he doesn't. For there, stretched out across the sky is the Milky Way, Linda has her place, Linda has her duty, and in all of that Linda has her joy. And with that joy she sparkles and shines almost as brightly as her husband; the Northern Lights. Then End.

[Voice of Troy Cline]

We'd like to give a very special thanks to Jordan for this sharing this storytelling experience.

We are very interested in hearing your questions and comments about the Sun-Earth Day podcasts. If you have something to say, send an email to sunearthdaypodcast@mail630.gsfc.nasa.gov.

As a quick note, this year's Sun Earth Day kits are out of stock. The good news is, you can still download many of the materials from the Sun Earth Day website. While there, don't forget to register in order to receive important Sun Earth Day information and to be in line for next years free Sun-Earth Day kit.

For all other details about the Sun-Earth Day program including information about our past SED themes be sure to visit our website at sunearthday.nasa.gov.