



Kyaamuya

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Mother and daughter preparing for the evenings dinner.

“Momma,” 9-year-old Kaiah asks, “When I’m done grinding the corn, can I go over to Shumana’s to visit before dinner?” Manci looks over at her daughter and shakes her head. “No my dear. It’s no time for a little girl to be out after dark.” “But why?” was the immediate response. “You know perfecting well why. Tonight is Kyaamuya.” Her mother reminded her. “It is a sacred time. The night is filled with mystery and power. Hopi’s observe this time out of respect for the spirits.” Showing some disappointment, Kaiah continues with the grinding of the corn. Stopping momentarily, she turns to her mother, “How can you be certain it’s tonight?” “Did you not see the moon the past couple of nights?” “What of the moon?” “It has been appearing as a cup. Tonight it will look like two horns pointed up. This will be the night of the longest moon,” her mother replied. “Now finish up with the corn because we have guests coming tonight for dinner.” “Guests?” “It’s the beginning of story telling time. Your father is bringing one of the elders over.” “I hope it’s not Omawnakw,” Kaiah said pouting. “His stories are long and boring.” Smiling to herself, “Yes Kaiah, his stories do tend to be long at times, but they are full of our Hopi wisdom and traditions.” Manci finished preparing the squash and turned her attention to the rabbit her husband had brought home. “I remember the stories I heard as a girl.” She paused for a moment to reflect. “They spoke of the world going to sleep. The sun and heavenly bodies. It was told that while they slept they couldn’t hear us and it was safe to talk of them.” “Does the sun really sleep Momma.” “Maybe not like you or I, but many things do”, Manci said. “Like the lightning sleeps during this time. The ants and spiders all go underground to sleep before the sun comes back. It is the way of things.” “I know they all go away during the winter momma, but do I have to stay here and listen to the stories tonight”, Kaiah asked. “Couldn’t I just go upstairs? I could still hear them.” Knowing Kaiah would be more inclined to play with her doll than listen to the stories Manci looked straight at her. “Absolutely not. I will not have you disrespecting one of our guests.” Kaiah gave a heavy sigh of resignation to the prospects of listening to the stories of a tribal elder. Seeing her daughter’s disappointment Manci knew how to brighten her up. “Tell you what. You help me with the fry bread and I will make some kutuki for the story telling tonight.” Kaiah instantly perked up. The prospects of having parched corn as a treat during story telling lifted her spirits. “Yes momma! I love kutuki!” Kaiah worked at grinding the corn for the fry bread even harder and then suddenly stopped and looked at Manci. “Now what?” Kaiah gave a half-smile and said, “I still hope it isn’t Omawnakw.” This time Manci laughed aloud with Kaiah. “Me too.”