

"They danced their dances.

"They waited on the Great Spirit for guidance."

Once again Vangie hesitated, almost as if she were questioning the right of an outsider to know this history. After a few moments, she continued:

"In a vision it was told we must separate. Some must move north, some must go south. Because we were all equal, none would be spared this migration.

"It was decided by the wise men that lots would be drawn, determining which families were to go to the south and which were to travel north.

"Our families came north. We were unprepared. The weather was severe, and we had never known cold. The land was dry and barren; we had only known lush, fertile ground.

"Our people built caves into the mountainside, and we survived the cold.

"We learned to cultivate the dry land and to water the corn with water from the rivers.

"Our people learned to build with the mud and the trees; we learned to love this barren but beautiful land which was now ours."

Vangie's voice changed from soft and sad to proud and almost challenging.

"Tell them we have prospered," she said.

"We have suffered, but we have learned."

Her voice rose again: "Tell them we are well. We are together. We have survived!"

Silence. Rhea waited.

"Tell them," Vangie continued, "that we would like to hear from them.

"Will you do that for me? I know your message is important, but you are the first we have trusted with this request."

Deeply honored, and tearfully grateful, Rhea said, "Yes, I will speak of this to your people. May I show them pictures?"

Vangie nodded.

* * *

Rhea kept her promise.

Whenever she met the native people in Argentina and talked of her own mission, she passed on the message and the greetings from Vangie.

The native people responded lovingly and gratefully, for they too had wondered about the stories the old ones had told.

Each time the request was carried out, Rhea wrote to Vangie of her people's situation, and sent back pictures, just as she gave pictures of the Pueblo

Indians to all who would listen.

Eventually, Rhea had an opportunity to visit the Mapuche tribe on the Lago Rosario Reservation, in the Patagonia region near the Antarctic.

During that visit she told of the message from the Jemez Pueblo.

As she spoke, the chief bowed his head. Because women in that area are not supposed to speak out, Rhea was afraid she had offended the chief.

The silence became almost overwhelming as they awaited his response.

It seemed hours before he lifted his head and said, "What she has told us is the truth. We have the same story in our legends. We are the same people."

For the first time, he looked directly at Rhea.

"Return to them our greetings," he said, "and tell them how we are. You know more of what she wants to hear than we know what to tell her."

His voice became heavy and sad as he talked about his tribe and the problems of the Reservation.

He told how the young people had begun to make fun of the stories of their origin.

How the older men had fasted for proof to pass on to the younger men.

How one had had a vision that said information about their origin and their people would be brought to them by a white-haired woman.

His voice was almost a whisper as he told how the younger men had roared with laughter on hearing this.

How the young men had suggested it was an old man's wish for something different because in that area no one had ever seen a white-haired Indian, let alone a white-haired Indian woman!

The chief bowed his head as he explained that he was grateful and honored to be the one who received the message. He would, he said, pass the information on, and hoped the young men would listen, stay on the Reservation, and away from the problems of the cities.

The spirit was peaceful, the people in the room united.

Certainly one could say the jewel had been passed.

Also, one could say that what had happened was eventful enough for one day in the service of Bahá'u'lláh, couldn't one?

But there is more.

* * *

Among the many reasons for the visit to the Reservation was the need to register the identification numbers of the Bahá'ís there. (A law had been enacted in Buenos Aires, requiring that all religions register the names of

their members.) Gerald was recording the information.

"You'd better look at this I.D., Rhea," he said. "They have the same name as you."

Rhea had just been able to get the Mapuche women to talk with her (a considerable accomplishment) and wasn't at all eager to look at someone's I.D.

"Rhea, this is important. Look at this!" Gerald insisted, pointing his finger to the exact spot he wanted Rhea to read.

"Coliman! Why, that's my name!" Afterward, Rhea hoped she hadn't shrieked.

Gravely, the chief nodded.

"My family have always been chiefs," he said. "Me, my father, his father, and his father's father.

"When my father's father's father was young, he married a Welsh lady whose name was Coleman (in Spanish, Coliman).

"Her people tried to take her away, but she chose to stay with my great-grandfather.

"She taught him to read the white man's books. She read from books, and taught the people how to use our earth to make better bricks, by using fire. The books showed how to build our houses strong, how to protect our health and our land.

"Together they made us a strong tribe.

"When the Spanish sent the black men against us, expecting to annihilate us, she read to us about the tactics of battle. We survived.

"My great-grandparents were wise. They lifted the Mapuches of Lago Rosario high.

"When the Spanish decided that since they couldn't get rid of us we must live on the Reservation, my great-grandparents refused until they negotiated favorable terms.

"In return for staying on the Reservation, we were given schools. We were given our own hospital—with doctors, and the promise of training for our people. We now have Mapuche doctors, and this very week I watched my granddaughter become a registered nurse. Not a sister—not an aide—but a real registered nurse.

"However, we remain Mapuches and, as such, in Argentina, we are considered little better than a good dog, and less than the spirited horses we are allowed to raise and sell to the military.

"The government, when it required that we all be registered, refused us the right to use our maternal name (in Argentina, children use the name of their mother). The official edict said that no Indian had the right 'to pretend' to a white person's name.

"Therefore, those of us who have the blood right, have Coliman as our middle

name."

Rhea explained that one of her great-grandfathers also came from Wales, that in the United States children used their father's name. She explained that she felt they were cousins.

Gravelly, the chief welcomed her onto the Mapuche Reservation, with the privilege of a home there.

Within the hearts of the pioneers the jewel glowed warmly. So much had happened that day that the couple, with their grandchildren, returned to Trevelin completely amazed.

Imagine! Two circles of unity had been completed before their eyes—in just that one day.

The greetings were carried from one branch of a long-separated family to another, reuniting a nation, while Rhea found a family, unknown to her, which, by virtue of that relationship, made her a member of the Jemez tribe of New Mexico.

“Oh God! Increase my astonishment.”

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