

Is There Love Between the Girl and the Bear

Tai-Hsuan Lin

ENG 201- Global Literature

Professor Lisa Stubbs

9 March 2023

Is There Love Between the Girl and the Bear

The story of The Girl Who Married the Bear is based on the Indians of Carcross in southern Yukon. Its purpose is to emphasize the delicate and frightening balance between human and animal relationships that Indians believe has existed since the beginning of the world. The story also provides a more in-depth look at this group's cultural background, including their matrilineal kinship system.

In this paper, we aim to analyze the relationship between the bear and the girl, exploring the possibility of true love and the concept of Stockholm syndrome. By comparing the characters' backgrounds and analyzing their personalities, we seek to uncover the truth behind their relationship.

Culture Background

Origin

According to oral tradition, Yukon's native peoples have lived on the land since the world was created and ordered by the mythical creatures of the time - the ravens. Archaeologists calculate that the earliest humans inhabited the Yukon more than 10,000 years ago by crossing the Bering Land Bridge from Asia. The Southern Yukon Indians' gender tracing of their lineage is only through females, forming kinship groups through them. The wife and children belong to one matrilineal kinship group in each family, while the husband belongs to another. This division exists because society is divided into two parts or aspects, which are referred to as crows or

wolves. One must always belong to the mother of the mother but marry the father of the mother. The person who joins that part is also responsible for disposing of the corpse of the opposite part and performing the appropriate rituals.

Social System

The social system of Yukon's native peoples includes a rule of avoiding cross-gender siblings after puberty, meaning siblings should neither talk nor look at one another directly. However, despite this rule of avoidance, strong sibling unity is at the heart of society. Siblings never question each other's behavior and spend their lives helping each other with food and clothing.

Even legal ties are important in this system. Locals can always find a sibling or sister-in-law in the Yukon, as anyone within their own age range can be counted as a sibling, depending on gender, regardless of whether they are truly related by blood. Similarly, anyone of the same age can be classified as a brother-in-law.

The system also includes animals, and according to Yukon's indigenous people, animal people even looked like humans long ago until they pulled up animal masks after the transformer crows opened the daylight box. Nowadays, animals rarely appear in front of humans, but they have greater mental powers than humans and can make good use of them. A major philosophical and practical problem for humans is how to live in harmony with animals they are constantly confronted with and often have to kill to survive. Indigenous people observe many rituals designed to attract potentially beneficial forces of animals and to ensure the reincarnation of their souls to provide food for humans. It is important not to offend an animal or disrespect its

attributes, including its feces and carcass. If an animal is offended, it will retaliate by drawing the culprit into its own domain, making it difficult or impossible for them to return to the human world permanently.

This is exemplified by the story of the girl who stepped on bear droppings and was eventually taken away by a bear. As soon as she laughed at the bear's droppings, the girl was in danger. A handsome man appeared, and despite her desire to return home, she entered into a socially unarranged sexual alliance with him. Painful suspicions and dilemmas followed, and she gradually learned that she was living with a bear, thus betraying him. Despite this, she began to love him, but most ironically, she ended up doing the unthinkable herself: killing her mother and all her brothers, as her protector became her tormentor. Every rule of siblinghood and intimacy, as well as human-animal relationships, was violated.

Religion

Despite the story that the bear allowed itself to be killed, the bear shaman's husband possessed the ultimate power. As a result, today the grizzly bear is revered and given a burial ritual appropriate to the highest rank and power of man. The story is most often recorded in the Yukon and neighboring Matrilineal Territories, but Robert Breitman has published two versions from Woods Creek in northern Manitoba. The Cree practice ritualism, but unlike the Yukon Indians, they calculate kinship through the lineage of mother and father. The Cree says the girl's father (not her brother) hunted the bear husband, and she was killed by her only brother to escape the slaughter she and her son had inflicted on the entire village.

Speaking of shamans, shamanism is a religious phenomenon centered on the shaman, a person who is believed to be able to acquire various abilities through trance or ecstatic religious experiences. Although the abilities of shamans vary from culture to culture, they are often

believed to have the ability to heal the sick, communicate with the other world, and often escort the spirits of the dead to the other side.

Shamanism is particularly common among Arctic peoples, American Indians, Australian Aborigines, and African groups such as the San, who have preserved their traditional culture into the 20th century.

It is widely believed that shamanism originated in hunting and gathering cultures and that it persisted in some pastoral and farming societies after the origins of agriculture. It is often combined with animism, a belief system in which there are a large number of spirits in the world that may help or hinder human endeavors.

Characteristics of the girl and the bear

The Girl We can see a significant difference between the personalities of the girl and the bear in the story. Annie is a young girl with a distinct personality who, like many naughty children, does not like to obey her parents' instructions. She even kicks and steps on the bear droppings, indicating her age is likely between 12-16 years old. This age is explained by Erikson's psychosocial development as adolescence, a stage of awakening sexual impulses, rapid physical growth, and self-doubt. This may be why Annie is easily attracted to the bear (or the bear has cast a spell on her). Even after discovering his true identity as a bear, she still struggles to be independent and experiences sexual tension with the opposite sex. The story is written in a way that suggests a romantic element of love between them, or it could be interpreted as a symbol of the struggles of coming of age. Ultimately, the story shows that the woman struggled to love the bear and felt sad when he died.

The Bear NThe story's moral is to warn children of the consequences of disrespecting the bear, as the bear shaman assumes human form and takes the girl away. The story portrays the bear shaman casting a spell on the girl, making her forget about returning home and treating her as a companion for the rest of her life.

Turning the real grizzly bear, it is a significant part of American West and Rocky Mountain region mythology. As one of the largest land predators, it's known for the white or gray tips of its fur. While grizzly bears can be dangerous to humans, especially if provoked or if a human comes between a mother and her cubs, some studies have shown that humans have been attacked by grizzly bears for no apparent reason. This emphasizes the shaman's prophetic abilities to predict the future and the inevitability of death.

Love v.s Stockholm syndrome

Maecenas id luctus ligula. Cras condimentum eleifend nibh sit amet iaculis. Suspendisse placerat sollicitudin mi, vel ornare augue hendrerit ac. Nulla sed suscipit sapien. Cras pellentesque orci lectus, eu consequat enim.

Love

Let's use the perspective of a romantic story to assume that there is true love between the girl and the bear. First, let's define love. The Bible speaks of God's love for us. God could sacrifice his only son to die for us because he loves us, and we can say that love is sacrifice. God also does not want us to look at other gods; He is jealous when we worship other gods, and He wants us to focus on Him, so love has an element of possession. Looking back at the story, we

see that when the bear says he wants to kill the girl's brother, the girl says, "If you really love me, don't fight! You've been good to me. If you want to kill them, why do you want to live with me?"

The bear sacrificed himself to let the girl's brothers kill him. The bear did not know how to survive without the girl's help, as she looked for gophers for him to eat. However, he also did not want the girl to return home and be under a spell, wanting to keep her to himself. The girl had a baby with the bear and, after hearing her brothers' voices, knew that they had killed him. She felt so bad that she sat down and cried. She also said to her brothers, "You boys killed your brother-in-law!" She asked them to leave the bear's skull and tail with her. Seeing this evidence, we can say that the bear and the girl were truly in love with each other.

Stockholm syndrome

However, if we examine the story from a real-world perspective, it takes on a very different tone. It appears to be an example of Stockholm Syndrome, a psychological phenomenon in which captives begin to identify with their captors and their demands. Psychologists who study the syndrome believe that this bond arises when the captor initially threatens the life of the captive but then chooses not to kill them. The captive's relief at the removal of the threat of death can turn into gratitude for the captor giving them their life. The Stockholm bank robbery is a clear example of how this bond can solidify in just a few days, showing that early on, the victim's desire to survive outweighs their hatred for the person who caused the situation. The survival instinct is at the heart of Stockholm Syndrome. Victims live in a compulsive dependency and interpret even small acts of kindness in horrible conditions as good treatment. Removing the romantic filter, the bear initially kidnaps the girl with a handsome human appearance, and also uses his ability to make the girl forget his family. Moreover, he impregnates her and ultimately convinces her to kill her entire family (except for the youngest

brother) as retribution for turning him into a bear. This story has no element of love, and in fact, it more closely resembles a horror movie.

Discussion

What fascinates me about the world we live in is the fact that we can experience different emotions and form unique perspectives based on our experiences and circumstances. Whether we view the relationship between the bear and the girl as a display of strong love or as a cautionary tale about the consequences of our actions, depends on our age, life experiences, and cultural background. Although the author intends to teach children and future generations to value the harmony between nature and humans, it's not entirely unreasonable to explore this story from different angles.

As we grow older, our views on love, relationships, and morality can shift significantly. Some may view the girl's decision to live with the bear as a form of Stockholm Syndrome, while others may see it as an act of sacrifice and devotion. Similarly, some may see the bear's transformation into a human as a benevolent gesture, while others may interpret it as an act of deception and manipulation. It is the beauty of storytelling that it allows us to examine complex issues from multiple angles and encourages us to think critically about the world around us.

At its core, this fable is a reminder that our actions have consequences, and it is crucial to maintain a balance between our desires and the natural world. It is a message that we can all benefit from, regardless of our age or background. Therefore, regardless of the perspective we choose to take, the story of the bear and the girl holds a valuable lesson that can guide us towards a more harmonious existence with nature.

References

McClellan, C., Johns, M., & Wedge, D. A. (1998). *The Girl Who Married the Bear*.

Groundwood Books.

Britannica. (n.d.). *Stockholm Syndrome*. In Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved March 9, 2023,

from <https://www.britannica.com/science/Stockholm-syndrome>

National Geographic Society. (n.d.). *Grizzly Bear*. *National Geographic*. Retrieved March 9,

2023, from <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/grizzly-bear>