

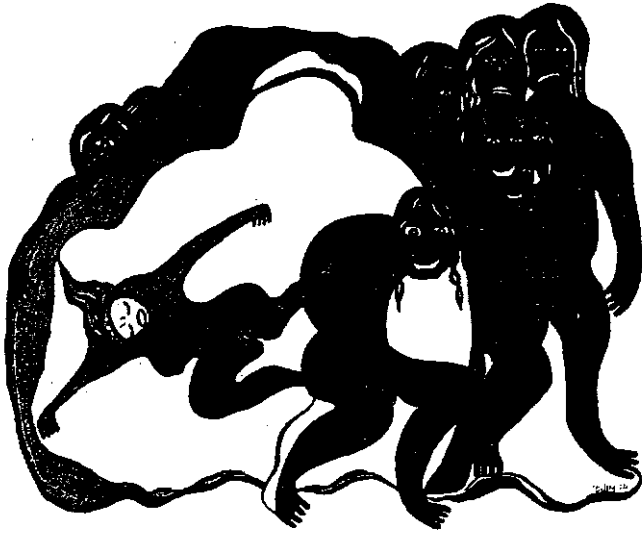
BEFORE YOU START READING

This text has been scanned and run through an OCR (Optical Characters Recognition) program. This basically means that the initial image (scan) was read by a computer and rendered into text (enabling e.g. full-text search). However, whenever the OCR program wasn't sure about a word, it inserted the initial image of the word instead. Thus, **some of the words in this present file may seem to display unusual typography** (typically: ragged edges of the characters, bold typeface, different font size etc.), but **this distinction was not present in the original, i.e. it should not be interpreted as the author's emphasis.**

Thank you for your attention and enjoy your reading!

ÚALK

P.S. If you print out this file, be kind to the environment and select "Print pages 2-xx", omitting this warning. Thank you 😊



TALES from the
SMOKEHOUSE

Herbert T.Schwarz

Illustrated by Daphne Odjig

Nanabajou and His Daughter

Blue Sky, like you I am a man of the past. But times have changed. There are now two ways, the old and the new. Could we still live according to our customs of long ago? No, that's no longer possible! We are no more as one with the land. Those days are gone and will never return. But protected by the spirit of the sacred lodge, we still have our stories to tell, stories of our people and of days long ago."

With these words, Brown Eagle, a respected member of the tribe, began his tale.

A long time ago there lived a mighty hero and medicine man named Nanabajou. He was a brave warrior, a skilled hunter and was known for his medicinal skills. Indeed, as a secret patron of the Medicine Society, so great was his magic that he could change himself at will into any living creature that suited his fancy. It was well known that at times he employed this secret knowledge to fulfil his selfish whims. In those days, powerful chieftains possessed several wives to satisfy their desires. Nanabajou, the greatest of them all, had ten wives constantly at his beck and call; they were busy all day long cooking and feeding Nanabajou's many children, scraping and tanning hides, and most important, looking after the physical needs of the mighty chieftain. The heavy tasks he imposed on them during the day were nothing compared to the demands he made at night. This tried them all very much and they complained bitterly: "Nanabajou, mighty chieftain, how can we feed you and your many children, make our clothing, and look after our lodges, when you keep us awake night after night?"

These complaints made Nanabajou angry and he decided to show them who was boss. He picked a hair from his scalp and cut it into nine pieces. At night he burned some herbs with each piece of hair and mixed with it

a drop of blood from his **little** finger. By this powerful magic he conceived nine more Nanabajous! And there was no mistaking **them—each** had the same star-shaped birthmark on the left buttock. All nine promptly proceeded to the lodges of nine of the wives while Nanabajou himself visited the tenth, which meant that Nanabajou did not waste any time in visiting each lodge in turn. This way he stayed with each of his wives all night. In the morning ten sore wives descended upon the lodge where he was still asleep. "Never mind him being a mighty chieftain," they said. "We will wake him up." And they did. Great was their confusion when each one in turn accused Nanabajou of spending the whole night with her alone.

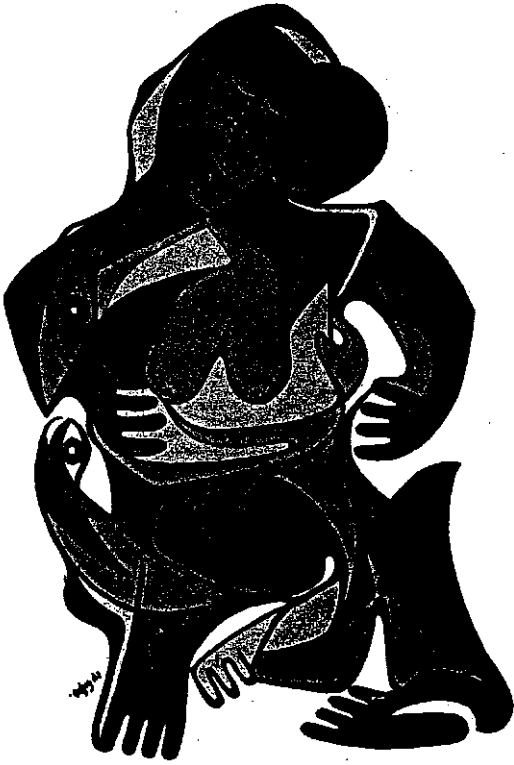
"My women must be mad," retorted Nanabajou and he stalked out of his lodge in mock disgust.

It was a very hot day and he decided to cool himself beside a **lake**. As he got closer to the **lake** he heard someone splashing in the water. Cautiously Nanabajou looked out from behind a tree and saw his oldest daughter enjoying herself in the cool waters of the lake. The sight of her surprised him since he had never seen her **undressed** before. He noticed that she had quite grown up and how beautiful she had become. "She is ready for a man now. But truly no man deserves her more than I! I must keep an eye on her to protect her from all the evil men who live in our village!"

So Nanabajou was sweet and attentive to his oldest daughter. But with his ten wives around him his task was difficult. The more he thought about his daughter, the less he wanted to lie with his wives. When he stopped seeing them entirely, they complained about that too, just as they had complained when he visited them too often. One day he changed himself into a seagull so that he could watch his daughter while she was bathing in the lake. As he swam around the girl his feathers ruffled with excitement—but what could Nanabajou do as a seagull?

So that night he changed himself into a caterpillar and crawled out of his lodge to where the sleeping girl lay. He crept up her leg and belly and lodged himself between her warm breasts. He had just settled down to enjoy his comfortable resting place when the girl woke up, picked him up between her fingers and threw him out of the lodge. In the morning Nanabajou was sore and bruised all over and he limped badly on one leg. "I had a bad **fall** when I was hunting deer," he told his ten wives. So they all massaged his bruised body, rubbed it with bear grease, wrapped him up in blankets and placed hot stones all around him to keep him warm. In the evening he was sore no more.

That night Nanabajou again discarded his human form, and this time changed himself into a rabbit. He hopped over to his sleeping daughter and woke her up. Seeing such a nice friendly rabbit, she let him snuggle his soft furry body close to her side. He settled himself comfortably on top of her and licked her breasts with his wet pink tongue. He became so excited that



he wanted to hop up and down on the lovely girl—but what could Nanabajou do as a lowly rabbit?

In the morning, while the girl was still asleep, one of Nanabajou's sons spotted the lively rabbit in the lodge. He picked him up by his long ears and prepared to skin him alive for breakfast. Nanabajou just managed to wriggle out of the boy's grasp and escape to his lodge, where once more he assumed his human form. But Nanabajou's head was sore, he had one black eye and his ears were bruised and swollen.

That evening he felt sick and rolled on the ground in great pain, foaming at the mouth, and gradually becoming weaker and weaker. The efforts of all the medicine men from the secret Medicine Society were in vain. They chanted powerful magic songs to counteract the evil curse which had entered Nanabajou's head. They beat on their drums and tried to suck out the sickness from his head with hollow bear bones. But it was all in vain. In a few hours Nanabajou's hands fell limp, his eyes closed, and he breathed his last.

A great wail went up through the whole village. Nanabajou, the hero of them all, was dead. His ten wives cut off their hair to mourn the loss of their chief and lover. They and all of their children and friends went into deep mourning. Nanabajou, dressed in his best buckskin, was wrapped in strips of birch bark and placed on a high scaffold with his hunting equipment and trophies. For four days and four nights his ten weeping wives and all his children, his relatives and friends sat around it. After a time they returned to their lodges, leaving Nanabajou's body alone on the high scaffold.

Several days later some hunters from the village passed the scaffold where Nanabajou's body lay. They were much dismayed to see blood stains on the wooden platform. Nanabajou's buckskin clothing was torn to shreds and his weapons and trophies were scattered everywhere. There were bear tracks on the soft ground. Obviously the mighty chieftain's body had been devoured by man-eating bears.

The hunters rushed back to the village and related the terrible news. The wise medicine man of the secret Medicine Society listened in grave silence. The evil spell that had possessed Nanabajou must have been powerful indeed. No wonder the strongest magic could not protect him from this horrible curse which not only killed his spirit but also mutilated his body.

Several months after Nanabajou's untimely death, a young stranger arrived in the village. He moved with captivating grace. His fine dark features and long jet-black hair contrasted sharply with his white buckskin clothing, the finest buckskin dress the village had ever seen. The handsome stranger requested hospitality for the night. He had travelled from far away. All ten of Nanabajou's widows welcomed him into their lodges. After some hesitation, the stranger accepted the invitation of one of them, the one whose daughter had been the object of Nanabajou's desire.

He was offered choice caribou tongue and liver, served by the widow's oldest daughter. The handsome stranger, although polite and gracious to his hostess, could not take his eyes off the young woman. The girl was aware of the handsome brave's attentive looks and realized that he was completely captivated by her charms. Although not a word was spoken between them, by **her** subtle gestures she made it perfectly clear that his attentions were not unwelcome. **In** spite of her apparent composure, she was far from **being** calm. Her heart pounded and she felt heat and languor in her body whenever she was close to him. Once he had eaten, the stranger thanked the widow **but** ignored the girl. He stretched his arms, yawned, and retired to a corner of the lodge where he covered himself with fur robes and was soon asleep.

When the moon was at its fullest and the lodge fire was burning low, the widow's youngest boy woke up and **felt** an urge to relieve himself. The boy opened the skin-flap door and went **outside**. When he returned, he heard a strange commotion from where his sister lay. He tiptoed to her side to investigate. He was surprised to see the young stranger wrestling with his sister and holding her down. She was sighing and crying as the stranger was smacking her exposed bottom. The boy was amazed to see that in spite of all this rough treatment, the girl groaned as if in pleasure, embraced the stranger, and spoke to him in endearing terms.

The boy ran to his mother, woke her up, and whispered urgently in her ear, "Come with me and look at my sister! The stranger is beating **her—she** must have made him very angry for him to act so roughly." Nanabajou's widow hurried to investigate. She could barely make out her oldest daughter, but there, bathed in the full moonlight, she saw the famous bottom with its star-shaped birthmark as it moved up and down! Quietly she left the heaving, sighing couple and called the other wives. They armed themselves with clubs and surrounded Nanabajou. All at once they let out a yell that startled him from his bliss. Before he could collect his wits they whacked him with the clubs until he was bruised and swollen from their blows.

Nanabajou barely managed to escape into the woods. He did not have a stitch of clothing and he shivered with the cold.

"That such a thing should happen to me, the mighty chieftain," he said to himself in sorrow. "Who would have imagined it. Why, I almost came to grief. Those wild women nearly clubbed me to death."

And with these words Nanabajou, cold and sore, disappeared into the forest.

The Bear Walker

O my Grandfather! I am sick and lonely. O Spirit of the sweat bath, heal me. Let my hurt depart upwards like the steam from the sacred stones!"

Thus spoke Big Thunder. There was great sorrow on his face as he addressed the assembled men. His lean and muscular body glistened with sweat. This, however, did not hide the mass of wicked scars that covered his chest.

"You may wish to know," he continued, "how I arrived at this sorry **state**—I who not long ago was a skilful hunter and enjoyed a woman's love! All this I will tell you, and you, Spirit of the sweat lodge, hear me; restore my spirits and heal me!" And he began his story.

Though my speech is the same as yours, I am a stranger among you. I came from the far North where I lived content and happy with my beautiful woman, Wa-hanata. We had a spacious lodge and **all** around us were great lakes and forests. We were never short of food or skins for our clothing.

My misfortunes started in the month when all the leaves turn yellow. One day I spotted a herd of caribou not too far from our lodge. Immediately I gave chase, but it was several days before I caught up with them and felled a buck with one shot. With the heavy caribou on my shoulders, I started my journey home.

While I was away in the bush, Wa-hanata decided to go berry-picking. She picked up her birch-bark basket and set off along the path through the bush to a small clearing. There the blackberry bushes grew thick one upon the other, and in no time Wa-hanata had filled her basket full of berries. **It** was an unusually hot day for that time of year and Wa-hanata, pleasantly

tired, settled down on the grass in the clearing and soon fell asleep. In her sleep she had a vision.

She dreamt of a powerful stranger who accosted her on the path in the bush. Although she tried to get away from him she did not succeed, and, as it was no use resisting, Wa-hanata submitted. The stranger exposed himself and covered her with his body. After her initial shock, Wa-hanata reconciled herself to her fate, and, in truth, she enjoyed the stranger's love-making very much.

When she awoke it was already dark, and she realized that she must have been asleep for quite some time. With the memory of the dream still in her mind, Wa-hanata started home. As she approached a large rock, Wa-hanata saw a huge brown bear barring her way. She tried to retrace her steps, but it was too late. The bear had noticed her, and when she backed away he gave a mean growl. Startled and afraid, Wa-hanata stopped, the basket fell from her hand and she stood frozen to the ground. Recovering somewhat, she said to herself: "I must be kind to the bear, and he will let me pass." Slowly she approached the huge animal. She got so close to him that she could feel his hot breath on her face and she became sick and dizzy.

Just the same she addressed the big bear: "O Grandfather, let me show you my affection and then let me go home." As she said this, she gently stroked his neck, his chest and his belly, until she reached his lower parts. She made herself more comfortable by kneeling in front of the bear as, hesitatingly at first, she caressed his genitals. Since he didn't seem to mind, she applied herself to the task with vigour. All at once his body relaxed. He gave a contented sigh and stretched himself on the ground where he lay perfectly still.

"Now," thought Wa-hanata, "this is my chance to escape." Quietly, she got up from her knees and started to creep away. But the big brown bear was not asleep. He opened one eye, gave a mean growl, and with his massive paw beckoned her to come back. Wa-hanata did what she was told. Once more she caressed him and, when she reached his lower parts, the big animal grunted with pleasure.

A strange desire came over Wa-hanata; the spirit of the bear enveloped her senses. She no longer had any thoughts of returning home. As she petted and caressed the great hairy body; the musky odour excited her. Abruptly the bear stood up on his hind legs, seized her in his massive paws and pressed on her with such force that her back bent like a pliant bow. When he covered her, she was totally overcome; she shuddered and moaned in his brute embrace.

When I arrived back at our lodge with the fat caribou buck on my shoulders, Wa-hanata welcomed me in her usual manner but there was no mistaking her air of restlessness and preoccupation. As soon as I had eaten, she told me that she had to pick some blackberries. She combed her hair,

put on her best clothes, and stepped out **with** her DasKet, **vvhen sne returned** late that evening, the basket was only half full. She was tired and soon went to sleep.

The following morning I asked her, "How is it **that** you go berry-picking when we have a fat caribou buck and plenty of fish to eat?"

"The berries will be gone soon," she replied, "and I want to dry them for the winter." And then she again put on her best dress, combed her hair, and went out.

As I watched her go, I said to myself, "This is very strange. I'll follow her and see where she goes."

Stealthily I followed her through the bush. There was something about her eagerness that made me curious. I was about twenty paces behind her when she reached a rock not far from the little creek. There she stopped. I hid myself in the bushes, making sure I could see her clearly.

Softly Wa-hanata called, "O my beloved, come out, come out!" To my amazement, a huge brown bear came out from behind the rock and Wa-hanata began to caress his belly and private parts. Then, to my horror, the bear had intercourse with her.

I felt terrible and started to run back to the lodge. On my way I saw a small deer and I killed it with one shot. **Instead** of returning to the lodge I picked up the deer and carried it to the large rocks at Arrowhead Lake and left it there. Then I hurried home. Soon afterwards Wa-hanata returned. Again she was flushed and tired and soon went to sleep.

The following morning I pretended to be very tired and said to Wa-hanata: "You must go to Arrowhead Lake and get the deer I killed while you were berry-picking." She was reluctant to go, but I insisted.

"All right, I'll go," she said and rushed out of the lodge.

But before she left, she threw a thread of sinew on the fire. It started to shrink and I realized at once that this was Wa-hanata's magic to make the distance between the lodge and Arrowhead Lake shorter. I picked the **sinew** from the fire, wetted it and stretched it out to its utmost limit.

I took off my clothes and put on one of Wa-hanata's dresses. Then I ran into the bush. When I reached the large rock I called out softly in Wa-hanata's voice.

"My love, come out, come out!" And as the great brown bear emerged from behind the rock, I approached as if to embrace him.

As soon as I was close enough, I plunged my knife deep into his chest. I kept hitting him with my knife again and again, and the great brown bear, realizing that he had been tricked, roared at me with all his fury. He tore at me with his claws and ripped the flesh of my chest and shoulder. Ignoring the burning pain inside me, I kept hitting him desperately with my knife. Blood poured out in great streams and suddenly he keeled over and lay still. I approached him cautiously, and when I saw that he was really dead I cut

so that I now possessed the power of the bear. Then I hurried back to my lodge.

Late in the evening, Wa-hanata returned home panting with exhaustion.

"I never realized that Arrowhead Lake was so big," he hissed angrily.

"Never mind," I replied, "while I was hunting, I hurt my arm. We must rest a few days in the lodge."

The power of the bear was in me and I kept her close to my body for many nights. Wa-hanata seemed to forget the bear and she returned my love with great passion.

One day I told her, "I can't go hunting for a while, my arm is still hurting, but let's go berry-picking to occupy our time." And Wa-hanata, not suspecting anything amiss, agreed.

I led her along the narrow path until we came to the large rock where I killed the great bear. There he lay, stinking and rotting, with maggots and flies crawling all over him.

I grabbed Wa-hanata by the neck and cried out, "There is your great lover! Go and make love to him now!" Still holding her firmly in my grasp, I cut off all her hair. Wa-hanata broke loose, and in the struggle she touched my charm bag. Inside this bag were the testicles of a beaver, the source of my masculine power, and when she touched the bag she destroyed my potency. The spirit of the bear then entered Wa-hanata and she became a bear-walker, at times human, and at times bear-like. Quite lost, she wanders forever like a ghost from one place to another.

Desolate in spirit, I left my lodge. For many days I travelled in an unknown country, where I met many friendly people. They made me welcome in their lodges and their women were very kind to me. But since the curse of Wa-hanata was on me I could not return their kindness, and at night I was always lonely.

This is my story, and now I pray to you, Spirit of this sweat lodge, heal me, and let my hurt depart upwards as does the steam from these sacred stones!

In the silence that followed Big Thunder's story, more water was poured over the heated stones and thick steam spiralled towards the ceiling.

It was then that Blue Sky turned to Big Thunder and said: "My Son, there is sorrow in our hearts, and we have pity for you as your misfortune is great. But the wicked Bear Walker's curse is not final. We can destroy it according to our ancient ways!"

Gravely, Blue Sky threw some red, brown and yellow herbs into the sacred fire. The sweet-smelling herbs burned and the smoke rose and mixed with the thick steam. Big Thunder inhaled the sticky vapour deeply. Soon his body stopped trembling and his weariness passed away. Completely

... among them, one of the smaller shapes, which in this swirling mass one shape became clearer than the others, it detached itself from the rest and assumed the form of a girl. How he loved her! She had looked after him when he first arrived in the village, she was kind to him. She would be so delighted his attention had now been attracted to her. Now she smiled at him and gently beckoned him on.

Big Thunder was afraid no longer. Bursting with happiness he soared towards the ceiling, and there, in the smoke and steam, he embraced the smiling girl.

