



Ririro

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Nipon And The King Of The Northland

Unknown writer

The Summer Queen, whom the Indians called Nipon, lived in the land of sunshine where the life-giving beams of the mighty Sun shone all year round on the blossoming meadows and green forests. The maiden's wigwam faced the sunrise; it was covered with a vine which hung thick with bell-shaped blossoms.

The fair queen's trailing green robe was woven from delicate fern leaves and embroidered with richly colored blossoms. She wore a coronet of flowers, and her long dusky braids were entwined with sprays of fragrant honeysuckle. Her moccasins were fashioned from water-lily leaves.

Nipon was very busy in her paradise of flowers. Every day, she wandered through the green forests where she spoke words of encouragement and praise to the great trees, or she glided over the meadows and helped the flower buds unfold into perfect blossoms.

Sometimes the maiden's grandmother, whose name was K'me-wan, the Rain, came from afar to visit the land of Sunshine. The Summer Queen always welcomed her and listened carefully to the words of warning which K'me-wan solemnly gave before leaving.

"Nipon, my child, heed what I say. In your wanderings, never go to the Northland where dwells Poon, the Winter King. He is your deadliest foe and is waiting to destroy you. This grim old Winter King hates the fair beauty of the Summer Queen. He will cause your green garments to wither and fade, and your bright hair to turn white like his own frost. All your youth and strength he will change to age and weakness."

The Summer Maiden promised to heed her grandmother's warning, and for a long time, she did not look in the direction of the Northland. But one day, when she sat in front of her sun-bathed wigwam, a strange longing crept into her heart—a longing to look at the frozen Northland where Poon, the Winter King, reigned. Slowly, she turned her eyes in the forbidden direction, and there she saw a wonderful vision. The far-away Northland was flooded with sunshine. She could see the broad, shining lakes, the white mountain peaks touched with rosy mists, and the winding rivers gleaming with light.



"It is the most beautiful land I have ever seen," said Nipon.

She rose slowly and stood for some time looking at the enchanting beauty of the scene before her. Then she said, "My heart is filled with a strange longing. I shall go to visit the Northland, the Land of Poon, King of Winter."

"My daughter, remember K'me-wan's warning," whispered a voice, and Nipon knew that her grandmother was speaking. "Do not go to the Northland where death awaits you. Abide in the land of Sunshine."

"I cannot choose," said Nipon. "I must go to the Northland."

"Heed my warning! Heed my warning!" whispered the faint voice of K'me-wan, the Rain.

"I cannot choose," repeated the Summer Queen. "I must go to the Northland."

In her delicate robe of leaves and her coronet of flowers, Nipon left the Land of Sunshine and began her long journey northward. For many moons, she traveled, keeping her eyes fixed on the dazzling beauty of the frost king's land.

One day, she noticed that the shining mountains, lakes, and rivers in the land of Poon moved onward before her. She stopped for a moment to consider the marvel, and again a faint voice whispered, "Turn back, my child! Destruction awaits you in the land of King Winter. Heed the warning of K'me-wan."

But the willful Summer Queen closed her ears to the pleading voice and proceeded on her journey. The beautiful vision no longer seemed to move away from her. Surely before long, she would win her heart's desire, she would reach the beautiful land of Poon.

Suddenly, fear seized the Summer Queen, for she felt that the sunshine was gradually fading away. A chill wind from the distant mountain rent her frail

garments, and with a sinking heart, she saw the leaves of her robe turning yellow, the blossoms fading and dying. A cruel wind blew and tore to pieces her coronet of flowers. Then she noticed that her dusky braids were turning white as the frost.

"K'me-wan's warning!" she cried. "How I wish I had heeded K'me-wan's warning! The Frost King is cruel. He will destroy me! Oh, K'me-wan, help me! Save me from destruction!"

Soon after Nipon left for the Northland, her grandmother knew what had happened, for from her Skyland, she saw that no smoke rose from the Summer Queen's wigwam. K'me-wan hastened to the land of Sunshine. There she saw that the blossoms on the queen's wigwam were beginning to wither, the ground was strewn with fallen petals, and the leaves of the vine had lost their shining green color.

"A gray mist covers the face of the sun, and a change is gradually creeping over this beautiful land," cried K'me-wan. "I'll send my gentlest showers to refresh the woods and meadows."

But the Rain-mother failed to bring back the color to the Summer Queen's island.

"The trees and flowers need warmth as well as moisture," sighed K'me-wan. "The leaves of the forest are beginning to turn orange, crimson, and brown. Every day there are fewer flowers in the meadows and along the banks of the brook. A great change is creeping over the land of Sunshine."

And as she sat in Nipon's wigwam, grieving, she heard the Summer Queen's cry of agony. She heard Nipon call out, "Oh, K'me-wan! Save me from destruction."

"I'll send my bravest warriors to do battle with Poon," declared K'me-wan, standing and looking toward the Northland. "He shall match his strength with mine!"

Quickly, she called together her strong warriors: South-wind, West-wind, and Warmbreeze.

"Go to the Northland, my warriors," she commanded. "Use all your power to rescue Nipon from Poon, the Winter King. Fly to the Northland!"

K'me-wan's wind warriors fled like lightning to the land of Poon. But the crafty Winter King was not taken by surprise. The mighty North-wind, the biting East-wind, and the Frost-spirit, his strong chieftains, he held in readiness to do battle for possession of the Summer Queen. And when K'me-wan's warriors drew near the Northland, Poon gave his command.

"Fly to meet our foes, my warriors! They come from the land of Sunshine! Vanquish them!"

And as he spoke, his chieftains saw that Poon's stalwart figure was growing gaunt and thin, and great drops of sweat were dropping from his brow.

At Winter King's command, his giants flew to match their strength with K'me-wan's warriors.

But the Snowflakes and Hailstones, led by the Frost-spirit, weakened and fell before Warm-breeze and his followers, the Raindrops. The cold wind warriors of the North shook and roared as they matched strength with the mightier giants from the land of Sunshine. Then, as K'me-wan's warriors pressed nearer and nearer to the Northland, Poon, the Winter King, weakened and cried out in agony, "Set Nipon free, or I shall perish. My warriors are vanquished by the chieftains of the land of Sunshine! Free the Summer Queen and end this strife!"

At this command from Poon, his giant warriors grew silent and fled back to the Northland, leaving K'me-wan's chieftains in possession of Nipon. Gently, they led the weary Summer Queen back toward her own land. They traveled for many moons before the beams of the great sun were warm enough to restore her beauty.

Only once on her journey back to her own land did Nipon stop. It was when she reached a place enveloped in gray mists and dark clouds, where the wild lightning leaped and flashed. The wind blew, and the showers fell continually in this land of K'me-wan. Through the clouds and rain, Nipon traveled until she reached the wigwam of the ancient Rain-mother. "Forgive me, K'me-wan," said the Summer Queen humbly.

"My child, you have well-nigh killed me," moaned K'me-wan faintly. "Your disobedience has brought great suffering to my cherished island. My giant warriors conquered, or Poon with his cruel ice scepter would have reigned king over all. Never again can I venture on such a struggle."

"Never again shall I disobey you," declared Nipon, the Summer Queen.

"Hasten back to the land of Sunshine," said K'me-wan, rising. "There you are sadly needed, for the leaves have changed their color, and the blossoms are almost gone. Hasten back and give them new life, my daughter."

Then Nipon bid farewell to the Rain-mother and departed for the land of Sunshine. As she drew near, her heart was filled with wonderful joy and peace.

"Welcome, Nipon," laughed the warm sunbeams.

"Welcome, Nipon," sang the gentle breezes.

"Welcome, our life-giving Summer Queen," nodded the forest trees.

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