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Hi!
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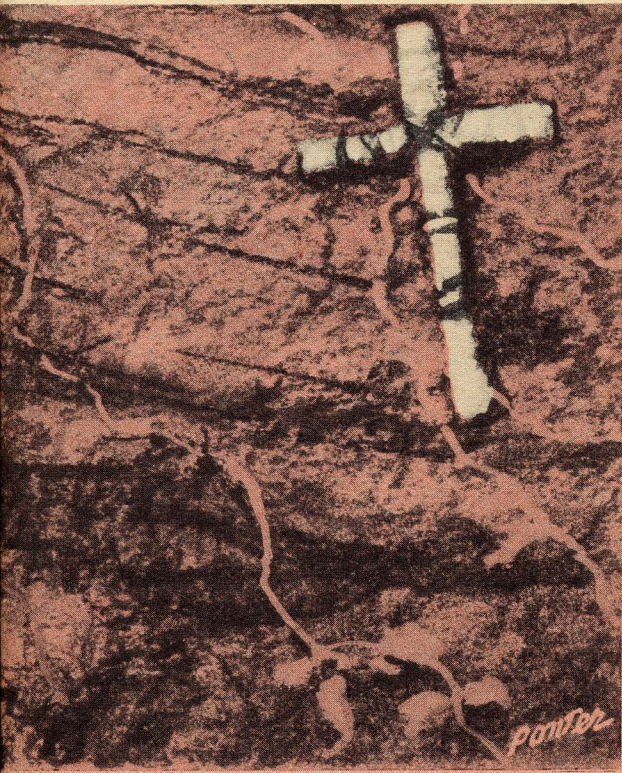
Grout



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slender limbs of the white birch tree
and had hung it on the rocky wall.

When the Spoon Da

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Christian maidens who vowed their lives to God,
Tekakwitha had longed to be one of them.



nce Came

By ANNE HEAGNEY

THE BELLS OF SAINT PETER'S MISSION rang sweetly over the waters of the Cayudutta, calling the Christians of the village to their devotions. And in the long house of the great chieftain Tatalomo, his niece and adopted daughter put down her sewing to listen. Ah, those lovely, tranquil bells, how different from the savage beat of the tom-toms, the wild frenzy of the heathen rites practiced by her people!

The bright beads she was sewing on a tunic of finest doeskin slipped through her fingers, those fingers that were forever busy with many tasks. A look of wistful yearning welled up in her great dark eyes whose sight was so dim. Ten years ago, when she was only four, a smallpox epidemic had taken the lives of her parents and baby brother. The little girl had recovered from the terrible disease but it left her face pitted and her sight obscured.

That was why she did not work in the fields like the other girls and women, for she could not bear the bright sunshine. But in the dim light of the long house she cooked and sewed and cleaned and kept such beautiful order that the whole tribe marvelled at it. Indeed, order and cleanliness were rare among the Mohawks!

"Tekakwitha — Tekakwitha," they cried out, which means "see how she puts everything in order." And so Tekakwitha became her name, for it was the custom of the tribe to call their children after the things they did well and often.

Someone was calling her now; she could see a shadowy figure in the open door. It was too far from the fireplace in the hall where she was sitting to see who it was — the chief's house was a hundred feet long and the wide hall ran the whole length. But Tekakwitha knew that voice and hurried to meet the visitor with a smile.

"Minewaga, how glad I am to see you! Are you on your way to the mission?"

"Yes, Tekakwitha," said the other girl. "Father Pierre is here to prepare us for baptism and I want you to come with me."

"If I only dared," sighed her friend. "It would be like the heaven the Black Robes told me about when they stayed with my uncle three years ago. Oh, what a grace they brought to this house! I remember everything they said about the Christian Faith, and ever since then I have been one of you in my heart."

"Then be one openly," Minewaga advised boldly. "You are too timid,"

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dear gentle Tekakwitha, too scared of your uncle and aunts. Let me take you to Father Pierre."

"Oh, no, no, that could only bring trouble on him and his flock. It is true that my uncle agreed to let the Black Robes hold services for the Christian captives, but he would be furious if his own people were to join. He would drive out the Black Robes, set fire to their church—perhaps torture and burn them at the stake."

Tekakwitha buried her face in her hands and shuddered. Minewaga was frightened, too, for it was less than a quarter of a century since the Mohawks had martyred the saintly Father Isaac Jogues and his companions. They had been the first French missionaries to plant the Cross in this savage land of the mighty Iroquis. And of all the Five Nations, these proud Mohawks were the most cruel and wicked.

"Forgive my foolish words," said the Christian girl. "I spoke like the babbling brook, forgetting who you are. Your father was a great warrior chieftain and his brother Tatalomo has taken his place at the head of the sacred Turtle Clan, which your people believes to be descended from the gods."

"I have no such false belief," Tekakwitha assured her. "My mother was an Algonquin like yourself and a faithful Christian. Scarce do I remember her except as a lovely dream; yet she planted the good seed in my soul. Some day it shall flower. Some day I shall be a baptized Christian."

After Minewaga left for the chapel, Tekakwitha went back to her sewing. Soon her aunts would be home from the fields. They would scold when they found out that she had not finished the fine tunic with the bright beads. Never before had she worked with such unwilling fingers, never with such a heavy heart.

Suddenly she flung down the do-skin tunic and the little beads of red and yellow and blue spilled over the floor. "I can't finish it! I won't wear it," cried Tekakwitha with a sob.

When the aunts came back from the fields, they found the door open wide and the long hall deserted. Aunt Ungala, the chief's sister, pointed to the tunic. "Look, Tekakwitha's dress

is not finished and the Spoon Dance is only two days away!"

"This does not surprise me," said Aunt Sosanee, the chief's wife.

"I have observed her moping over her sewing while the other girls sang for joy. And when they practice their dance steps, she has always some excuse to stay away."

Aunt Ungala shook her head in perplexity. "She is such a strange girl."

The Spoon Dance was the greatest event in the life of an Indian maiden, for it was really a marriage ceremony. Dressed in their bridal finery and waving big wooden spoons, the girls danced around a long table in an open meadow. Large bowls of soup were placed along the table, and after their dance, the girls stood in a row behind them.

Then the young braves, also arrayed in their finest, filed past the table. When the one she favored came by, each girl dipped her spoon



**Keep me, O Lord, as the apple
of Thy eye; protect me under
the shadow of Thy wings.**

Compline



in the soup and held it out to him with a smile. This meant that he was her choice for a husband. After the Spoon Dance the young couple went to the bride's home where they sat side by side while her father placed a blanket over both their shoulders. This was the sign that from henceforth they would share the same home. There were more ceremonies to bind them in wedlock, followed by days of feasting in which the whole tribe took part.

"I have tried to make my niece understand that it is her duty to marry," went on the chief's sister. "I have reminded her that she is the ward of a great chief and should be proud and happy to marry the son of another great chief—"

"She is stupid and ungrateful," snapped Aunt Sosanee. "Any other girl whose looks were ruined by smallpox would be thankful to have a handsome brave like Wanoni for her suitor. She has known him since she was a child. He is brave and fearless, but with her, he is gentle. His father

is chieftain of the Bear Clan, his mother my own cousin. This marriage has been arranged since they were small children."

Her angry voice rose on a shrill note that carried to the nearby apartment. A girl about Tekakwitha's age appeared in the doorway—a lovely girl with bright eyes and smooth bronze cheeks touched by glowing color.

"Mother," she said to the chief's sister, "Cousin Tekakwitha is afraid of Wanoni. She shrinks from him like the fearful rabbit before the fox."

"Fear is a weakness," said Aunt Sosanee with contempt. "We Mohawks fear only one thing and that is to be afraid. When your cousin marries, she will admire her husband because he is strong and brave."

The girl shook her head. "Tekakwitha will never admire him. She thinks he is very cruel—"

"Hiawida," interrupted her mother firmly, "speak no more foolish words. A warrior must be cruel, for how else can he vanquish his enemy?"

"This is true wisdom, Mother," said Hiawida, "but Tekakwitha hates war and torture. I have seen her faint away at the sight of bloodshed."

"Enough," cried Aunt Sosanee. "There is no time to waste. Find your cousin, Hiawida, and bring her to me. She shall finish her dress for the Spoon Dance before she gets a bite of food or a drink of water."

Silently the girl turned away, slowly she left the village and moved towards the forest. Through the trees the swift-flowing river glowed like a flame in the setting sun, a light breeze fanned her cheeks. But Hiawida saw nothing, felt nothing as she walked along with a look of sadness on her young face. At the river bank she paused.

There was a place in the valley where the river joined the waterfall. Here the sunlight fell through the mist and spray in a soft rainbow, no matter how bright the day. Tekakwitha loved this spot and had built a secret grotto here in a little cave hidden behind thick vines. She had fashioned a cross from the slender limbs of the white birch tree and hung it on the rocky wall.

Whenever she was troubled—and today she was deeply troubled—Tekakwitha

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came to this sanctuary. On her knees now before the cross, her soul cried out in an agony of fear and doubt. Ever since the Black Robes had told her of the Christian maidens who vowed their lives to God, Tekakwitha had longed to be like them.

She had never seen these Sisters the missionaries spoke of, but in spirit she was already one of them. Here in this blessed solitude where God spoke to her heart, she had dedicated her life to His glory and the saving of souls. Yet there were times like this when it all seemed a mad, impossible dream, for she was hemmed in by enemies to her vocation. Not even her Christian friend Minewaga could understand this strange, unheard-of resolve never to marry.

Tekakwitha leaned her unhappy head against the rough surface of the rocky wall and prayed desperately to be saved from this marriage. Always before when she had prayed like this, she had heard a heavenly Voice speaking in her soul. The turmoil would depart and she would be filled with comfort and peace. Today there was no answer, no ray of light from above to break through the awful gloom. Timidly, she asked for a sign.

"Tekakwitha, Tekakwitha, where are you?"

It was Hiawida calling. Tekakwitha stepped quickly forth from the curtain of vines, for no one else had ever entered her hidden grotto. Still as a small creature of the wilds, she stole close to the waterfall and sat down on a large stone.

"Here I am, Hiawida," she answered.

The other girl came hurrying up. "What are you doing? Aunt Sosanee is very angry with you. She sent me to bring you back at once."

"Please leave me," begged Tekakwitha. "I don't want to go back."

"You must. Unless you finish your dress you will be punished."

"Oh, gladly will I endure any punishment," cried Tekakwitha, "rather than take part in the hateful Spoon Dance."

"Then it is as I suspected, you do not want to marry Wanoni!"

Tekakwitha nodded her head and looked at Hiawida with unshed tears in her eyes. Hiawida studied her anguished face and shook her own head in bewilderment. Neither of them noticed that someone had come close, for the sound of the waterfall deadened his footsteps. It was Wanoni, who was seeking his promised bride. He stopped short when he heard what they were saying.

"How strange you are," Hiawida went on. "Wanoni is strong, brave, handsome, the son of a great chief. Why then do you weep?"

"It is not Wanoni, for I know what you say of him is true. But I cannot love him or any man, for I have pledged my love to God alone.

**PRAYER FOR THE CANONIZATION
OF CATHERINE TEKAKWITHA**

O God, Who didst wonderfully protect the innocence of Thy servant Catherine, and bestow on her the gift of faith and spirit of penance, grant that all who invoke her may obtain what they desire, and I also the blessing I humbly beg; so that her favor with Thee may be known to all, and she may be exalted to the honor of our altars, as among the Blessed in Heaven. Amen.

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I am sure He does not want me to marry like other girls."

Hiawida stared at Tekakwitha incomprehendingly. Tekakwitha tried to put her thoughts into words. "I feel in—in my soul—a call to a different life, a life where I will serve God. Someday I will be baptized a Christian. In my heart there is room only for love of Christ. So you see, it would be wrong for me to marry. It would not be fair to Wanoni. Our marriage could only lead to unhappiness. Oh, tell me that you understand, Hiawida, and will help me to escape?"

"No, no," began Hiawida but before she could say more, Wanoni came from behind the waterfall. His lean, bronze face was touched with a strange pity and sadness.

"I understand, Tekakwitha," he said, and his voice was soft and kind. "Your words are true and good. I shall not force you to marry me against your will."

Tekakwitha gave a little cry of joy, her face radiant. "Then I am free. Oh, Wanoni, I thank you and I shall always pray for you—"

"Tekakwitha, you cannot do this to Wanoni," cried out Hiawida. "You will make him ridiculous at the Spoon Dance. All the people will laugh at him when they find out his bride has run away." And suddenly she burst into tears.

"See how she grieves for you, Wanoni," whispered Tekakwitha. "You are very dear to her."

"Look at me, Hiawida," said Wanoni, putting a hand on her shoulder and gently lifting her tear-stained face. "Do you really care—enough to take Tekakwitha's place at the Spoon Dance?"

"I've always cared for you," confessed Hiawida, smiling through her tears.

"Let us go back to the village and speak to our parents," said Wanoni.

"Hurry then," advised Tekakwitha with a smile. "I'll follow you and finish your dress, dear Hiawida."

The sun was down and the heavens were majestic in the golden afterglow. The river ran like silver, birds were singing their evening song, and Tekakwitha's heart was singing, too.

Light flooded her soul and she saw the future stretching before her. Other marriages would be arranged for her, there would be suitors more insistent than this understanding companion of her childhood. Always she would resist, always she would run away.

She would be cruelly punished, she would endure great hardships, suffer many trials. She would be despised and an outcast, she would be persecuted and mocked. The mothers of the warriors would condemn her and the girls turn on her in fury for defying their tribal beliefs.

But come what may, she would never yield. And some day—she knew not how or where—some day she would be a Bride of Christ. She looked up to heaven and her face was beautiful. Above the dark forest a single star glowed with steadfast light.

THE END