

GREETING THE NEW DAY

CHAPTER 1

Tota Ma marvelled at the beauty of a new day. The early morning light was just beginning to fill the eastern sky and *Orhen'kene* was calling the sun back for another day's journey. It was time to give thanks and greet all of Creation. As Tota Ma got ready, she thought about the importance of giving thanks to the Creator for all the gifts given to the *Onkwehonwe*. Tota Ma worried that people

were forgetting how to be thankful. Tota Ma liked to use the *Ohenton Karihwaterhkwen* which she learned from her *Akoso'tha* who grew up speaking *Kanyen'keha*.

She stepped out into the beautiful morning sunshine and placed an offering of *oyen'kwa'onwe* on the water. She then began offering thanks:

Ohenton Karihwaterhkwen

Teyethinonhweratons ne onkweshon'a
Teyethinonhweratons ne yethinihstenha tsi yohwentsyake
teyethinonhweratons ne kahnekaronnyon
teyethinonhweratons ne kentsyonshon'a
teyethinonhweratons ne ohenteshon'a
teyethinonhweratons ne ononkwashon'a
teyethinonhweratons ne otsinonwashon'a
teyethinonhweratons ne kahikshon'a
teyethinonhweratons ne tyonnhehkwen
teyethinonhweratons ne kontiriyo
teyethinonhweratons ne karontashon'a tahnnon okwireshon'a
teyethinonhweraton ne otsi'ten'okon'a
teyethinonhweratons ne kayeri nikawerake
teyethinonhweratons ne yethisothokon ratiwerahs
tethsitewanonhweratons ne etsitewatsi'a tyohkenekha karahkwa
teyethinonhweratons ne yethiso'tha ahsontennekha wennitaratyes
teyethinonhweratons ne yotsistokwaronnyon tsi tkaronhyake
tethsitewanonhweratons ne shonkwaya'tison
thok nikawennake



Tota Ma always felt good hearing or saying these words. She felt great joy when she visited the Quinte Mohawk School at Tyendinaga and heard students reciting the *Ohenton Karihwaterkwon* during the morning announcements. Their voices sounded so wonderful! She closed her eyes and thought about how it must have been in times long ago, when all *Rotinonhsyonni* people greeted the morning this way. It made her feel that it was possible for the cycle of life to continue as originally intended.

As a little girl, Tota Ma was taught by her grandparents the importance of being grateful and thankful for the many gifts given by the Creator. Her grandparents taught her to be thankful for the things often taken for granted in life, like the sun and the moon. Teachings share that two suns were created in the sky. One sun was the daytime sun, and he was called the Big Man. Elders say that the rays of sun are like the hands of the Creator and with those hands, touch each one of us when the light surrounds every human on earth. The second sun is the night time sun, our grandmother. The Elders say she walks twenty-eight to thirty days on a single predictable path in the universe. As she does this, she orchestrates the women of every nation.



Tota Ma was told that, as the youngest members of Creation, humans depend upon everything else for daily life. This included a teaching from her *Akoso'tha* about the importance of trees. Her *Akoso'tha* said that with every breath taken in comes oxygen that the tree gives as a gift. With every breath out, carbon dioxide returns to the tree. One responsibility of the tree is to take up carbon dioxide and store it in its trunk so the air is clean and healthy. The air is like the breath of the Creator, provided so that we can continue to live on this Great Turtle Island in good health.



Her *Akoso'tha* also said that trees are important because they provide people with fuel to heat their homes, shade on a hot summer day, wood for making tools and utensils, and food as well. They provide food for bugs who like to munch on leaves, and become a home for birds. Tota Ma was taught that wood from trees can make good baskets. She was also told about the medicines that come from trees. Tea from the buds and the bark, as well as syrup and sap, help people to stay healthy. In the old days, the *Rotinonhsyonni* would make long houses covered with bark of the mighty Red Elm.

That tree has suffered because of bugs that came from Europe. Today most Red Elms have been eaten away.

Tota Ma could remember hugging trees as a child and it would feel like the trees were hugging back. She would also place an offering of *oyen'kwa'onwe* at the base of the tree and say *wa'ikonnonhweratons*. Now a grandmother, Tota Ma must think about ways she can explain to her grandchildren the importance of knowledge, respect, and gratitude for the gifts of Creation.