



Totem Initiation

A big event was about to happen in my girl-scouts experience. This was the night I would be initiated and receive my first Totem name. I had heard many stories about it. To earn my Totem name I first had to go through a ceremony where I had to fulfill a specific task. When accomplished well I would receive my Totem name. The scout leaders made a big deal out of it and I was very curious. VERY curious what my task would be. What would they come up with? They made it mysterious and would NOT give away any details about what to expect.

My friends and I talked about it and were trying to guess what they could ask us to do. Some of my friends had older siblings who already had gone through those initiations and had earned their Totem name. I was listening very intently and was intrigued by the stories they told me.

It even triggered some fear in me. The not knowing what is to come. The idea of everyone watching. Being about the youngest in the group. I entrusted into my friends ear that I didn't care what I was told to do as long as they didn't ask me to go into the woods by myself in the dark.

The afternoon came and preparations were being made by the leaders. A growing mysterious vibe was hanging in the air. Dusk fell. In the distance I saw the enormous campfire spitting and crackling at the location of our soon to be gathering. I closely observed if I could catch any information about what was about to happen.

Darkness arrived. We were asked to approach the fire in silence, sit down and wait for instructions while holding the space for the ceremony.

Finally the ceremony began! The names were being called of those who would be going through their initiation that evening. I was one of them.

The first initiate was called to come forward, it was my friend Hilde! A second girl was asked to come with her in front of the fire to assist her. The other girl was told to lay down on the ground and expose her belly. What was going to happen? My friend was handed a pot of Nutella and a knife. We were all wondering what this was about! Hilde was instructed to spread the other girls belly full of Nutella. Which she did. Now the real task was being divulged. Hilde was told to lick all the Nutella from the other girls belly, with her own tongue. If she did, she would receive her Totem name. Oh no! I remember her face crunching! I was glad it was her task and not mine! She looked at the Nutella belly, shook her head uncomfortably, gathered up her will power and went for it. Everyone was laughing of course. The Nutella belly girl most of all from the first second the tongue touched her belly. It was truly hilarious! My belly hurt from laughing so hard! At least it was Nutella I thought

and not mustard or something else less tasty! Hilde accomplished her task well and when ALL Nutella was gone and eaten, she received proudly her Totem name.

I heard the leader announce: “Alright, great job Hilde! Next person is Mieke De Clercq”. Oh gosh, my turn! What will it be??? I was curious, nervous and full of anticipation at the same time. Let’s go for it, I told myself! I walked into the middle of the group with all eyes on me and waited for instructions. One of the leaders started explaining to me: “ Mieke, you will have to brave the woods by yourself, in the dark! You know the pole tower we build at the river. At the tower we left a balloon. You will go to the tower, grab the balloon and bring it back. When you bring back the balloon you will receive your Totem name”.

My heart stopped. I froze in my tracks. My friend had divulged my secret fear to the leaders. How could she!!! I felt betrayed! The tower was next to the river, on the other side of the woods. About half a mile from where we were. I was shocked. Truly shocked. I would prefer licking 10 Nutella bellies if I only didn’t have to go in the woods by myself in the night. This was totally not funny or fun anymore!

I looked in the direction of the woods. It was dark and freaky. No lights. Just dark woods in the distance. I wasn’t even able to hear the river from where we were. This was not funny at all! Why did I ever tell her that! I will never trust anything to her anymore! That is not what I call a friend. I was mad and shocked and frustrated and horrified at the same time.

Thoughts were flashing very fast through my head. What am I going to do? What are my options? What can I do? I really do NOT want to do this. Shall I just let them know and forgot about my Totem name. Was it really worth that? No, I thought to myself, that is not who I am, flaking out like that. I am braver than that. I will have to get over this fear and just do it. How can she do that to me? I don’t call her my friend anymore. I will get her back for this! I looked at her and obviously she thought it was funny by the look I saw on her face. It wasn’t funny! Totally not funny! I was scared and fear is not funny!!!

Everyone was quiet. Wondering how I would handle this. They were probably all very glad that this was not THEIR initiation task. I wished it wasn’t mine either and this was just a dream.

Alright I thought. I am going for it. I will just brave my fear and do it.

When I showed my willingness to take on the task I was told I was getting a small little flashlight. That might help, I thought. I took the flashlight and still shocked, mad and shaking in fear I took off, alone, towards the dark intimidating woods.

As I walked away from camp I could feel the powerful presence of the woods. It was in silence waiting for me. The sounds of the laughter at the campfire and the glow of the fire moved further and further away from me as I came closer to the trees. I so wished I was one of them sitting there at the fire, laughing and having fun. But I was not, I was the one, all by myself approaching the dark scary woods, in total fear.

It wasn’t nature itself I was scared about. I love nature, I love connecting with the trees and the animals, but then in daylight, when the sun is out and the light illuminates. When the sun and light is gone, there comes an energy, a intenser feeling of darkness and mystery over the woods. I wasn’t scared about the nature out there, but the people who might be out there with less positive and loving

intentions. There are energetic dimensions out there that I have experienced as a very young child. Those showed up without warning and affected my reality. Those were the things I was scared about. The fear of not being in control of myself and my experience. If anything would happen, I was out there by myself. While everyone else was distracted and having fun. They would not be hearing me or know what was going on with me.

As I approached the first trees, I stopped and hid behind a bush and sat down, catching my erratic breath. I looked at the glow of the fire in the distance. I could hardly hear them anymore. Now I was hearing the river but still very far away from me. I was breathing very shallow and fast. I felt very lonely and totally afraid. Can I really do this? I am so scared! Shall I just quit and walk back and give up? I don't really have to do this if I don't want to. I can make my own choice in this. I was still so mad at the same time that my friend misused my trust!

At least I came this far I thought, I might as well just walk very fast towards the river, grab the balloon, run back fast and get over with it. I walked a few steps into the woods. Because the branches and twigs on the ground were all interconnected, with every step I made, I heard some noises in front of me. Was there an animal? Another person not from our group just wandering around in the woods? Would they have any leaders hiding to scare me? I turned on my flash light and shined the light in front of me. It even scared me more seeing the light shadows moving and I quickly turned it off. If anyone is out there, they certainly would notice me with my light. Human or anything else they could come to me quicker. I will just get used to the dark and walk towards the river without the flashlight.

I decided to braved my fears, walk as fast as I could towards the sound of the river. I knew there was the tower that was built by our group with poles and rope. There was even a ladder made from poles to climb up to a one story platform.

The sound of the river was getting louder and louder. It became louder than my fearful breathing, so I knew I was getting close. Also the powerful sound of the river started now to scare me a little. No signs anymore from camp, no noise, no camp fire to be detected in the distance.

I reached the river and the tower. PFFFF! I made it! At least I made it this far. I touched the tower. Where is the balloon? I felt around and didn't feel a balloon from where I was standing. I didn't want to turn on my flashlight because I didn't want anyone to see me all by myself in the middle of the woods. I was not able to hear anyone approaching me if they were, because the river sound was overpowering any other noise. I wanted to stay as invisible as possible.

No balloon to be found on the ground. OK, I will have to climb up the ladder, they must have hidden one in the tower. Quickly and still very scared, I climbed up. My hands felt around. No balloon.

Was I betrayed again. Was this a joke! This was absolutely not funny anymore. No balloon. More shocked I climbed back down and decided to walk back. No, stop. I cannot do that. If I arrive back at camp without a balloon they will not believe I did come down here. There must be a balloon. I decided to go back up into the tower and look again. I decided to quickly turn on my flashlight for a second and there it was. One single not even blown up balloon. Just the rubber. GRRRRR!!!! Really??? At least I found the balloon. What a relief!

Still in panic and in fear, I started my return back to camp. I walked as fast as I could, almost running. I tripped here and there a bit. The sounds of the crackling branches under my feet. Looking behind me every few second, hoping I was safe. The sound of the river slowly diminished as I reached the other

side of the woods, closer to camp. Breathing hard, walking fast, I finally walked out the woods back onto the field. In the distance I could see the glow of the camp fire again, I heard the sound of the laughing group. I told myself I was safe now. I would soon be reunited again with the others. I must have been gone more than half an hour. A terrifying half an hour. But I did it! I am glad I didn't flake out. But it was the opposite of fun. I walked back into the group and handed over the balloon. I told my friend to never do that to me again! It was over. I was given my Totem name. IMPALA (*). The next year, in another initiation, an adjective was added that specifies my characteristic. My full given Totem name is Diligent Impala. I was told because I was a swift, fast and graceful hardworking person. Well, I guess it was worth the effort to receive my Totem name.

This had truly been a real initiation test for me, an initiation to feel into and move beyond my deepest fears. Fears felt into the depths of my consciousness.

(*) A graceful antelope often seen in large herds in open woodland in Southern and Eastern Africa.

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Starshowerusa@startmail.com

(Sharing permitted with my name and email included)
(With a simple email let me know if you like
to be added or removed from this list).

Mieke's Voice - Part 1

Week 1 - Introduction part 1
Week 2 - A Rough Start
Week 3 - Vision
Week 4 - History Lesson
Week 5 - Bookstore Caecilia
Week 6 - Invisible Hand
Week 7 - My family, a circle of 5. Part 1 - My parents Anny & Hugo
Week 8 - My family, a circle of 5. Part 2 - My brother Jeroen
Week 9 - My family, a circle of 5. Part 3 - My sister Kathleen
Week 10 - My family, a circle of 5. Part 4 - Something about myself, Mieke
Week 11 - Encounters with extraterrestrials
Week 12 - The Movie E.T. - The Extra -Terrestrial
Week 13 - What happens after the body dies?

Mieke's Voice - Part 2

Week 14 - Introduction part 2
Week 15 - Expressing my authentic nature
Week 16 - Sexuality - part 1 - Unity
Week 17 - Sexuality - part 2 - Separation
Week 18 - Sexuality - part 3 - Menstruation
Week 19 - Intimate Relationships
Week 20 - America - part 1 - Newspaper Article
Week 21 - America - part 2 - Stepping into a movie

Week 22 - Another taste of freedom as a college student

Week 23 - Riding the waves, both high and low

Week 24 - A Holistic approach to healing

Week 25 - Overnight resident counselor in a high school

Week 26 - Mieke the younger in action - Part 1

Week 27 - Mieke the younger in action - Part 2

Week 28 - Totem Initiation