



The Invisible Hunters

Miskito People – Nicaragua / Honduras

What I am going to tell you was narrated by my grandmother, but her grandmother told it to her and she ... well, you know!

The people of the river and the people of the beach from the Miskito culture have this in common: that we like to tell stories. Another thing we have in common is that we live in a territory woven with rivers and embroidered by the Caribbean Sea.

Without further ado, let's go to the story.

Three brothers went out to hunt in the Bush for some delicious wild pigs called *waris*. After much walking, they suddenly listened:

‘DAR, DAR, DAR...’

They looked for the source of the voice like stealthy *yaguaretés*, while the howling monkeys spied, smiling behind the trunks of the trees. Shortly after, they discovered something that ... you will not believe it ... the voice came from a tree; specifically, a vine.

One of the brothers grabbed the talking plant with his hands ... and disappeared!

Another brother followed him ... and the same thing happened!

‘What have you done with my brothers?’ the third brother asked.

‘I did not hurt them,’ the voice answered. ‘If they release me, they will appear again.’

So they did, and so it was, as the voice said.

‘Who are you?’ asked the first brother who had taken the vine.

‘I am Dar,’ the vine answered. ‘If you touch me, I make you invisible.’

The brothers understood at once what this meant to them, an extraordinary possibility to hunt.

They wanted to tear off a piece of vine, but the vine disappeared.

‘First, you have to promise me that you’ll make good use of this power,’ Dar, the vine, said.

‘We promise,’ the brothers replied. ‘What do we have to do?’

‘In the first place,’ said the vine, ‘you will never sell wari meat, since hunters have always given it for free in the village. Also, you will not hunt with firearms, which scare the whole jungle. You will do it with as much skill as you have always done, with your spears.’

‘We promise!’ said the three brothers at once.

It was then that the Dar allowed each of them to take a piece of itself.

Thanks to the Dar, the brothers were very successful in their hunting that day, and also on the following day, and the next.

The people in the village enjoyed abundant meat, the main meals were covered, and children and adults improved their health day by day. This pleased the hearts of the three brothers.

‘How do you do that?’ one of the elderly women in the community asked one day.

And that’s how they told everything that happened.

‘While you keep your promise, the village will thrive,’ said the old woman, while the rest of the elders nodded.

Every day, the village was nourished with wari meat, so the fame of the three brothers jumped on board of a canoe, crossed the Patuca River and reached very distant ears ... being heard by people outside our way of life.

And one day these people came to the village.

‘We want to meet your hunter brothers,’ they said.

The brothers approached and kindly invited the travelers to eat wari meat. That was how, talking and talking, they learned that these men were merchants, and that they came to buy the wari meat.

‘We cannot do it,’ said one brother.

‘We cannot sell,’ said another.

But the third one remained pensive.

‘We thought that so effective hunters would be smarter,’ the merchants said, making fun of the brothers. ‘We just want to buy what’s left over.’

The brother who had been silent before said:

‘If we sell a little bit, nothing has to happen.’

‘And if the Dar notices?’ asked another.

‘Don’t worry! Nothing will happen,’ the first one said. ‘These merchants must have more power than the Dar.’

It all starts with selling meat from wari to the merchants, but these merchants wanted to buy a little more each time, so the village began to lack meat. Then the brothers decided to stop selling.

‘It’s your fault!’ one of the merchants accused the brothers when they told them they would not sell anymore. ‘You must hunt with firearms! Do not be lazy! Also, sell your meat only to those people in the village who pay for the bullets.’

The elders, seeing what was happening, tried to persuade the brothers. But the hearts of the hunters were already far from the village

... and from themselves. They did not care to see the children crying with hunger.

One day like all the others, they returned to the village with their game, ready to sell the meat, but suddenly they realised that nobody was looking at them anymore. They simply moved away as they passed, as if a wet, icy wind ran through the hot jungle.

The elders knew what was happening: the brothers had become invisible.

The hunters listened to the elders and went running to the mountain to ask Dar to make them visible again. They called: 'Dar! Dar! Dar!' but the Dar did not respond.

That is how they understood their terrible fault, their unfulfilled promise. They returned to the village, seeking to be received again among their own, but the elders did not receive them. Now they were invisible, and they were banished.

Even today it is said that the cold, wet shadows of three hunters roam the mountain, with no family or friends, no one to miss them. While a voice among the trees continues saying:

'Dar, Dar, Dar ...'. □

Adaptation by Jessica Gabriela Reyes, member of the Miskito People (2019).

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Comments

This story offers us a firsthand view of how indigenous peoples in the Americas were forced –and still are being forced– to change their customs, traditions and ways of life, which were more respectful of the natural environment, after the arrival of the European colonisers.

This Miskito legend is quite unlikely to go back beyond four centuries, given that dealing with British merchants and settlers, from whom the Miskitos began to obtain non-traditional products and

firearms, did not occur before 1629, when English Puritans settled on Providence Island, off the coast of present-day Nicaragua. It must have been after that date when the legend of the Invisible Hunters arose. This was perhaps intended to be a warning from the wisest elders of the Miskito people, so that their young people would not be swayed by the fascination of European technology, which threatened the ecosystems in their territories.

Sources

Rohmer, H.; Chow, O. y Vidaure, M. (1987). *The Invisible Hunters / Los cazadores invisibles: A Legend from the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua / Una leyenda de los indios miskitos de Nicaragua*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Associated text of the Earth Charter

Principle 12b: Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.

Other passages that this story illustrates

Principle 12: Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

Principle 12c: Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies.