

on their sleeping platforms, under warm sleeping skins. "We will go for ten, maybe fourteen nights," Donnacona added. "I want to go now."

spirits of the dead
in this instance,
a reference to the
northern lights

Hearing the tension in their father's voice they scrambled out of bed. He'd lost face by failing to stop Cartier from leaving for Hochelaga and needed a diversion, for himself as much as for his people. Two weeks in the bush would be good for everyone. Besides, hunting was necessary with winter coming. Great wreathes of mist now played on the river every morning.

Thirty canoes of hunters, women and children launched into the little river and turned north, toward the lakes and forest of their traditional hunting territory, toward the land of the Saguenay.

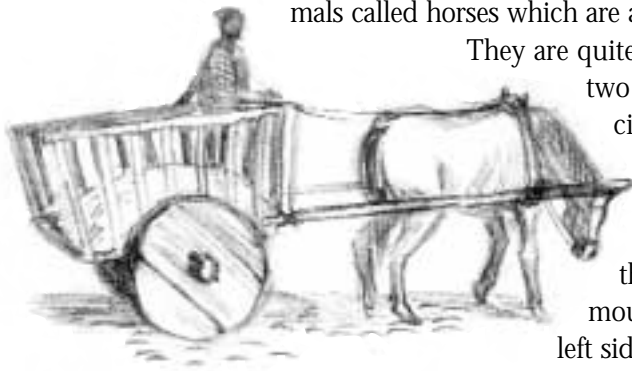
Maybe when we get back Cartier and his French will have left for home, Taigoagny thought. But there was something gnawing in his gut, something bad. Then, he remembered: the dead buck talking without words. He shook his head, shaking the thought away, and leaned harder into his paddling.

They travelled far into the northern forest and pitched their small skin hunting tents by a beautiful lake surrounded with brilliant gold and red leaves of autumn. The Great Spirit, Cudouagny, was happy with his people and hunting went well. Domagaya and Taigoagny, however, were still wary of each other and went off every day in different directions to stalk caribou at twilight, shoot moose wading in the shallow marshes, or trap sleek beaver in their ponds. The weather was clear. The spirits of the dead played across the sky above them every night.

"Tell us more about this France," Angoutenc said to Domagaya one night as they sat around the fire after a meal of fresh venison and porcupine.

"About their agouhanna."

Domagaya began slowly. "Well, one time Cartier took us to see him; they call him Frans-wah. It was a long journey. The French have these animals called horses which are as big as moose but without horns or a hump.



They are quite tame; I have sat on one myself. They tie two of these horses to a wooden box that has circles under it so that it can be pulled over their trails. We sat inside this black box while a man sat on top and pulled on cords attached to the horses' mouths. When the man pulled on the right side of the horses' mouths, they turned right; if he pulled on the left side, the horses turned left. They have special

words to make the horses go faster or to make them stop. This is how we travelled to see their king.”

“We should try these tricks with moose,” one woman said. The group roared.

“We rode in this carriage to the main village in the country,” Domagaya continued, “which is called Pah-ree. It is many, many times bigger than Kanata or even Hochelaga. There is a palisade around this village made of stone and every night the king’s warriors walk around it with bows and arrows to protect the people.”

His listeners nodded their heads.

“The people in this village all live in stone longhouses that are built side by side so close they touch each other. In the centre of this village there is one longhouse that is so big you can see it from far away. This is where their god lives.”

“They built a house for their god!”

“Did you see their god?”

“No, like Cudouagny, he can’t be seen, but I saw many pictures of his wife, Mary. Their god made her pregnant without lying with her and they had a boy named Jesus. He was a shaman and had much magic but he was tortured and killed anyway. They carve stone pictures that look like Mary and Jesus. These are in the longhouses where their god lives. They have a longhouse for him in every village in the country where people go to talk to him, but they only have one god.”

“He’s the only god?”

Domagaya shrugged. “That’s what they say.”

“Who looks after the hunters?”

“And the fish?”

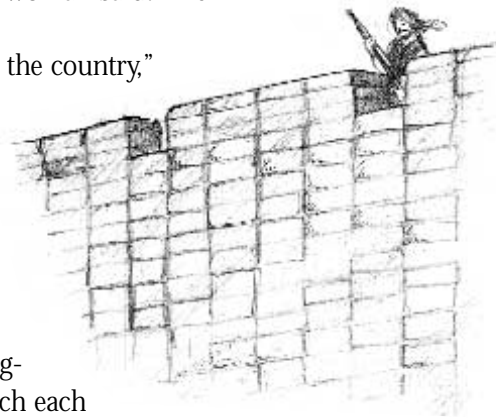
“What about the corn?”

“This god looks after everything; that’s what Cartier said.”

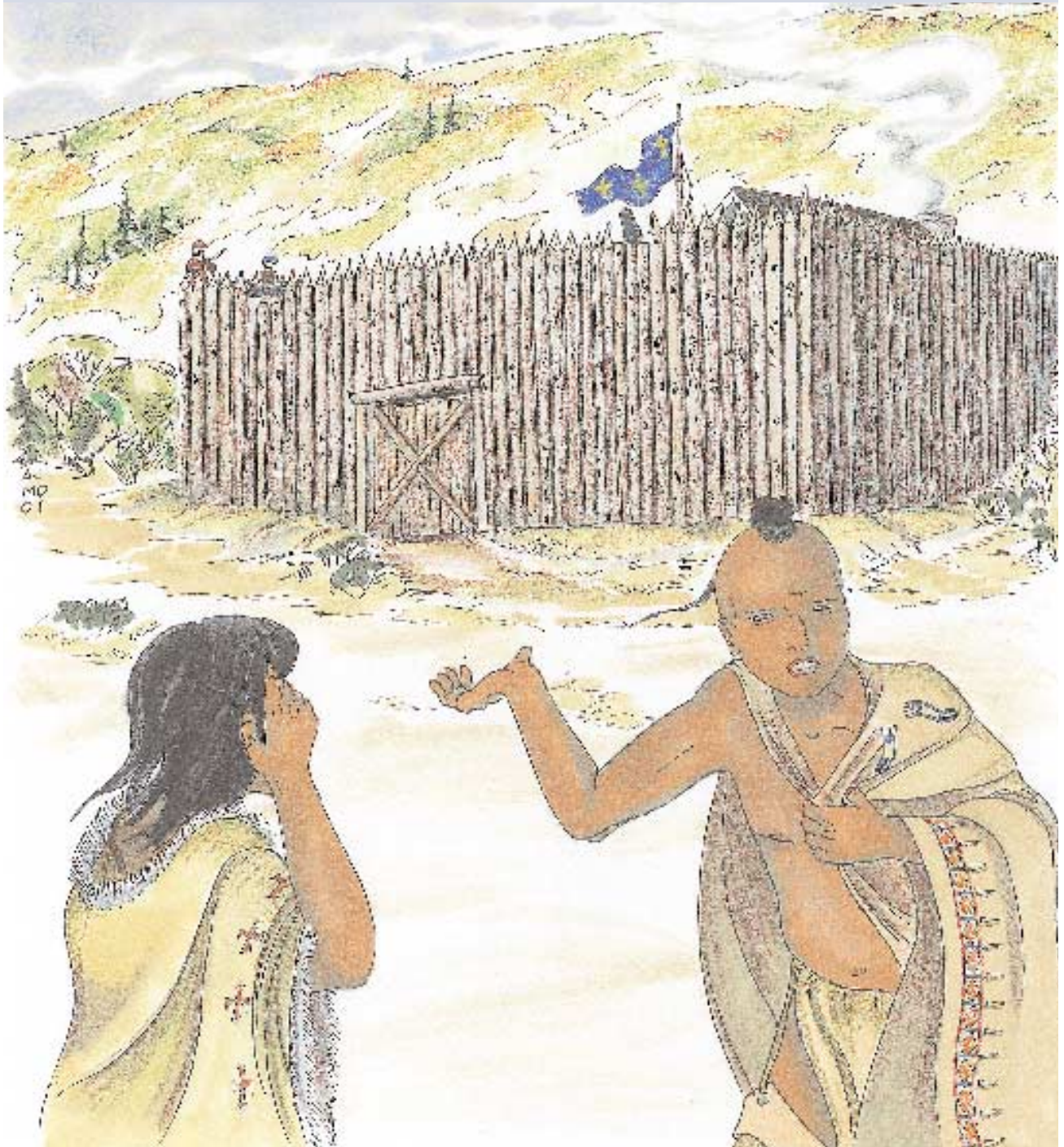
“You haven’t told us about their agouhanna yet,” reminded one of the listeners just as Taignoagny strolled over, picking his teeth with a stick.

“Why don’t you tell them?” Domagaya said to his brother.

“He is not much of a king,” shrugged Taignoagny, sitting down across the fire from Domagaya. “He’s certainly not a warrior.” He grabbed a stick and poked the fire, warming himself to his story.



palisade
(PAL-is-sade) a tall fence of poles or stone joined to form a fortification



He talked long into the night about the king's great house with its square stone walls and shining stone floors, about the fine clothes he wore, his crown of yellow metal with its glittering red and green stones, about the big chair he sat in, the men and women who surrounded him always, woman in flowing robes that pushed out their breasts, which were white as snow.

He told how Cartier had given them a deer hide and ordered them to make new buckskin loin cloths, how they wore them when they saw the king, how they had made war paint, too, and put that on. He talked of how they made bows and arrows and showed the king inside his house how they hunted by shooting a white bird that sat on a carved stone woman, not Mary but someone else. All these things he told the Iroquois. And years later, the people would tell these stories to their grandchildren word for word, just as they had been told. When the loons out on the misty lake fell silent, Taignoagny ended his story. The Iroquois crawled into their small hunting tents, wrapped themselves in furry hides, and dreamed strange dreams of places far away.



Something was wrong. The lead canoes stopped; the people in them pointed at the shore. Donnacona paddled harder. After two weeks of hunting, they were almost home. He rounded the bend in the little river, then he, too, stopped suddenly, letting the canoe drift down to the others. He barely heard the angry yells behind him, his sons, paddling hard.

"Those French witches," someone said.

"How dare they do this?"

How dare they do this?

The two French ships were still there, beached. But close by, on the level land in front of them, a stone's throw from shore, stood something new and awful: a palisade, a huge rectangular fortification of fresh-cut spruce logs, each log with a sharpened point. Frenchmen with guns stood on platforms behind these poles. In some places, where the poles were cut away, the black round mouths of cannons poked out.

"There's a longhouse inside," said Domagaya as his canoe brushed his father's. A column of smoke rose from the stones at one end of a peaked log roof behind the palisade. On a tall, thin pole, the French flag curled out in the chill October breeze. They could see one small door in the fort; it faced the ships and it was closed.

“Why would they build such a place?” asked Donnacona almost to himself, despair in his voice.

Taignoagny paddled up in time to hear the question. Through gritted teeth, he spoke the answer they all knew. “They are staying here all winter.”

“We must kill these dogs.” Angoutenc said, his dark eyes narrowed. “They have rubbed our hospitality in our face. We will burn this fort and their two ships. Tonight!”

No! “No!” said Donnacona. “Not yet, anyway. Let’s get to our village. Perhaps something has happened.”

The village was safe. The women had taken in the harvest. The rafters in the longhouses were thick with corn, hanging to dry. The pumpkins and squash were buried in deep storage pits dug in the far ends of the longhouses. The spies had just returned, too. Cartier would be back tomorrow or the next day, they said. Donnacona invited them to the council to report.

“We kept ahead of them as you instructed.” Hebbehin, the leader of the eight warriors, stood before the sachem and elders. “We warned the agouhanna at Achelacy that the French were coming. He gave Kart-yeh gifts of two children, but Kart-yeh only kept one, a girl, I think. When the French got to the islands at the end of the lake, they could sail no farther against the current. So they left their ship and some men and continued in their two longboats rowing.”

“Ouchidasca, agouhanna of Hochelaga, had already heard of Kart-yeh. He invited us to stay and we pretended to be with his people. He greeted Kart-yeh warmly. Ouchidasca wanted the Frenchman to heal his crippled arms and legs and Kart-yeh touched them but nothing happened. He gave them all knives and rings and other gifts he has given to us. Then he made a speech while he looked at some marks in a black thing he held open in his hands.”

Hebbehin stopped. “To us, Kart-yeh did not seem the same as when he is here. He seemed frightened. His men held their guns as if expecting an attack at any minute. Yet they went inside the village palisades and looked in their longhouses. Then they walked up the mountain where the spirits live but only stayed a little while. When he came down, Kart-yeh and his men refused to eat even though a feast had been prepared.”

A rumble filled the longhouse. The Iroquois could not believe how rude these Frenchmen were to turn down generous hospitality, though they had seen this before.

"The French, they almost ran to their longboats." Hebbehin broke into a smile as he remembered. The Iroquois laughed. It was good to know that this powerful Frenchman was afraid of them. "We passed them easily in the night as we came home. Perhaps they will be here tomorrow or the next day." Hebbehin nodded to Donnacona. "Ouchidasca sends you greetings and looks forward to a visit this winter." Then he sat down.

Angoutenc rose and turned to Hebbehin. "You are saying that Kart-yeh did not make a treaty or pact with Ouchidasca?" He seemed surprised.

Hebbehin rose to answer, shook his head. "No. Ouchidasca told him about the rapids on the river past Hochelaga that Kart-yeh had seen from the mountain. They also talked about copper metal and the Saguenay and about gold metal. But they made no pact."

A gust of wind hissed across the roof of the longhouse, rattling a loose piece of bark. The reed torches inside swooped and flickered, chasing shadows across the faces. Donnacona rose to speak.

"You bring us good news, Hebbehin. You men have done your job well." There were murmurs of agreement. "But there is still the matter of this palisade and pointy house that Kart-yeh has built. Angoutenc." Donnacona invited the war sachem to speak.

"Let's kill them all tonight before Kart-yeh returns." He looked around. "We'll use flaming arrows to burn the fort and the ships, then shoot them as they come running out like ants."

"But the French will still have one ship left," said Agona, standing, "and it has many cannons as well as guns. If what Domagaya and Taignoagny say is true, those cannons could knock all our longhouses down and kill all our women and children, too."

"It is true these French are rude and greedy creatures." Sadeguenda looked worried as she spoke. "But if we kill them, will not more come across the sea and avenge their deaths? They have many ships and many guns. We cannot win such a war."

Contarea rose. "This talk of guns and war is no good. Kart-yeh may be many things but, as Domagaya has said, he is not a warrior. He could have killed us at any time and he has not." The discussion went on, each person voicing a point of view. Finally, Donnacona rose.

"As I listen to this talk, I remember the words of our wise old friend, Teandewiata, who now is in the spirit world. Remember his words after the omen? 'They have accomplished things our people have not dreamed of,' he

told us. 'I want to see them before I die. Not just to satisfy the curiosity of an old man, but that we may learn from them and make better lives for ourselves, for our children and their children. Perhaps we can make a treaty with them that will bring us wealth and weapons that will protect us from our enemies. Friends, we should not be afraid of the days yet to come for we might as well run from the rising sun.'

He stopped, letting the words rest in the minds of the listeners. "His words are just as wise today as they were last year. If we kill this Frenchman who is much respected and very powerful in his country, we may start a war we cannot win. I have made a blood pact of friendship with him and I would lose my honour. Our people of Kanata would lose the wealth we might gain through trade; we could never use those guns for hunting. Our women would never have fine sharp knives and other things. I would not be a good agouhanna if I let these things happen. I am angry, too, but let us not take action against these French. Let us be guided by the spirit of wise Teandewiata whose words live still in our hearts."



The Iroquois became actors again, swallowing their anger over the fort and greeting Cartier warmly when he arrived two days later. He seemed relieved to be back and gave out many presents to the villagers. Cartier had never visited their village so Donnacona invited him. The Frenchman came with his armed men. Inside the longhouse, hanging on a pole that supported a sleeping platform, Donnacona pointed to five topknots hanging from a cord.

"What are they?" asked Cartier.

"Scalps of the Toudamans," Donnacona replied. "They massacred our people two years ago near Saguenay on the way to Hongueda. We avenge these deaths whenever we can." Cartier frowned. Shortly afterward they left and returned to the safety of their fort.

The message had been delivered.

A few days later, the Iroquois sent another message: they stopped supplying the Frenchmen with fresh eels and fish.

"You two did this, you rogues," Cartier called to Domagaya and Taignoagny one day as he entered the fort. "You are *agojuda*, very bad."

Taignoagny smirked. "Perhaps if you gave our people more than trinkets, they would not feel so cheated."



Winter along the lower St. Lawrence brings deep snow and long months of cold, so the spring thaw is always greatly anticipated.

Shortly after that, Manuoane escaped from the *Grande Hermine* and ran back to Contarea and Estahagao. The anxious Cartier reacted quickly. His men added horizontal poles to the palisades, then dug deep ditches around the fort at the base of the walls. They built a bridge across the ditch that could be raised and lowered. Every time he and his men went out, they were heavily armed. The French now stood guard on the palisade platforms all night and sounded horns when they changed.

“Why are you doing this?” Domagaya called out one day as he and a group of friends passed by.

“You know why,” replied Cartier. “You are troublemakers. You persuaded the girl to run away. Your heads are filled with evil thoughts. But I might forgive you if you bring her back.”

A few days later Donnacona, Domagaya and Taignoagny returned with Manuoane and took her to the ship. “The cabin boys beat me; that is why I ran away,” she told Cartier as Domagaya translated. Pleased that the issue was settled and friendship restored, Cartier broke out the wine and food. They toasted in the French custom as large snowflakes fell.