

From Dennis Tedlock's forthcoming book of Zuni narrative poetry, Finding the Center (Dial Press). Translated, with the help of Joseph Peynetsa, from a tape-recorded performance by Walter Sanchez.

PELT KID AND HIS GRANDMOTHER

Guide to Reading Aloud

- Pauses of less than one second are indicated by line changes, pauses of two or three seconds by strophe breaks.
- Loud passages or words are indicated by capitals.
- Glissandos are indicated by slanted type.

SON'AHCHI. THERE WERE VILLAGERS AT THE MIDDLE
PLACE

and

PELT KID LIVED WITH HIS GRANDMOTHER. (almost laughing)

They were living together this way, and at the Middle Place
the villagers
came down to get water
at their
well
and that Pelt Kid was very stupid, he just didn't know anything.
One night when they were still up
he told his grandmother, "Tomorrow, I
would like to gather wood."
That's what he told his grandmother. "Well, you may go
for we're almost out of wood," she said.
"Then we should
get some rest," that's what he said, and
they slept through the night, and the next day his grandmother
got up, then
she made some corn-cakes and they ate. When they had eaten he
put his rolled-up thongs on his back and
went down, went on down toward the south.
Before he left, his grandmother
had told him:

"Grandson, when you
gather wood, when the tree
falls
you must run away from it, " that's what his grandmother had
told him.

"Well then
I'll try to do that, " he had said.
He went on until
he came to where a dried-up tree stood, and he started to cut
it down.

He laid his thongs aside and started cutting.
Finally the TREE STARTED FALLING and he RAN AWAY, ALL
THE WAY BACK TO HIS GRANDMOTHER.

"Dear me! grandson, why did you come back so soon?" that's
what his grandmother said.

"Well, didn't you
tell me that when I cut the tree and the tree fell, I SHOULD RUN
AWAY? AND I LEFT ALL MY THONGS THERE. "

That's what he said.

"YOU BIG FOOL, YOU SHOULD'VE RUN ONLY A SHORT
DISTANCE FROM THE TREE, THEN YOU
SHOULD'VE RETURNED to chop it up and make a bundle
and you should've brought that home on your back, that's what I
meant, you shouldn't have run all the way home. "

"Why did you have to give me INSTRUCTIONS?

But anyway

let's eat, then I'll go back to make a bundle of wood and then
come back here, " he said.

When they had eaten: "Well, I'm going. "

Then the boy went on his way until

he came to where he had cut the tree, then he made a bundle of
wood. When he had finished the bundle he cut some juniper
leaves.

He put these

on his back where the load was going to rest, then put the
bundle there

and started on his way, going short distances and then resting.

He went on this way until he got back to his house.

He loosed his bundle and

went down inside

then the two of them ate.

"Now you have learned something, I have taught you. So now you will be going after wood, and when you have cut the tree and it falls, you must watch out. You must run only a short distance, you mustn't run all the way home, that's not what I told you."

"Well, at first I thought I was supposed to come all the way back here: that's why I ran back. Next time, I won't do that" that's what the boy said. Then they slept through the night.

They slept through the night, and the next day, he took his bow and over at Rockpile Mountain he went around pulling cottontails out of their burrows. He went around until he had killed four cottontails, then brought them home.

When he got back, he and his grandmother slept through the night. They slept through the night, and the next day he went down to his

field and went about hoeing. When it was about this time

(points almost straight up) about noon, he went back up to eat. "I want to go to the Middle Place."

"Please come back soon," she said for it was already afternoon. "You must take care of yourself" that's what she told him.

"W-Why why did you say that?" he said. "Well you must be on the alert, for without doubt, you will be noticed by the GIRLS," she said, for HIS VOICE WAS VERY HOARSE.

His voice was very hoarse, and he went to the well he came to the well.

Sure enough the girls were coming down to get their water and going back up. "Are you coming down to get water?" that's what he said, with his really hoarse voice.

"Yes.

Why don't we go up to my house? My, but you're cute 'n silly," that's what the girl who came down first

said to him. "Well now, I can't
go with you, for I must
go home.
When I get there
I'll ask my grandmother, and perhaps

if I ask her whether I can go with you, she'll consent, and
then I'll
go with you, (pained) I'm so bashful I can't just
go right into a person's house," that's what he said, making
himself silly.

Then another girl came: "Who is this cute fellow here?" "Well
I don't know, he was here when I came down and he spoke to me.
My, but his voice is CUTE," she said.

"WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MY VOICE?" that's what the
boy said. "Well, your voice is really cute. Let's go.
Why don't we go on up?" The one who came second said, "I'LL
TAKE HIM WITH ME, " AND THEY WERE ARGUING OVER
THE BOY, the two of them were arguing.

(tight) "But I can't go with either of you, for I must go back to
my grandmother, then

I'll ask my grandmother.

When she tells me what to do I'll go with one of you, " that's what
the boy said. "Well, HE'S MINE, for whoever finds something
first

will be the one to take it, " that's what the first girl said. "Well
now

why don't you both go back up, for I'm going home. "

And then

the boy went on until

he got back to his grandmother, and when they had eaten he
questioned his grandmother:

"When I left for the village, you told me to
take care of myself, and

when I got there I

drank and then I was just standing there

when a girl came down to get water.

She wanted me to go with her, and

(pained) IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY VOICE?" he
said.

"Well, poor thing, you don't speak well, for your voice is
hoarse. " "So THAT'S why she was admiring me

and wanting to take me home with her.

But I didn't consent, and then another girl came

and the first one said:

'I was the first one to find him, and whoever finds something
first will be the one to take it'

and I told them

'Wait, wait, I must go home, then I'll

ask my grandmother

and when she tells me what to do, then I'll go with one of you. '

That's what I said, and so

I didn't go with either of them, that's why I've
come back, " he said.

"Well

well, I will tell you this:

if a girl asks you to go

to her house

and if you go with her

then you must

(slowly) keep your bow-guard near your eyes while you eat, "

that's what his grandmother told him.

"But I'll wait:

I won't go tomorrow, instead I'll

go hunting

for cottontails, since our food is getting low. " "Well, it's up to
you, " she said

and then they

went to sleep. The next day

he got up and took his bow and

went to his usual cottontail-hunting place, going around until he
had killed four cottontails, then he took them home. It

was evening when he got there

and they ate and then slept through the night.

The next day he got up and

went down to his field, going about hoeing.

Around noon he came back up. When they had eaten he said, "I
might go

well, I might go to the village, " he said. "It's up to you.

But if some

girl should want you to go with her

then don't waver in your thoughts

for it happens that a boy

(slowly) will come to have in-laws somewhere, " she said.

(tight) "WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?" "Well, if you think
of marrying a girl

and you go to live somewhere else
you must still think of me now and then:
you mustn't
forget all about me. " "Well, I won't forget," he said.
And so
he left, going to his
usual place, and sat up there. Sure enough they were coming
down
coming down to get water, and one of them
filled her dipper with water and splashed him, (almost spitting)
KERSHPLASHHHHHH, and he went around shivering.
"I really think you're cute, why don't we go up?" she said.
"All right, let's
go on up," and while they were there the sun went down, and
the girl took the lead with the boy following her, the two of them
went up.

When she took him
inside her house: "My
fathers, how have you
been passing the days?" "Happily, sit down, so you've come,"
they said.
Then they
put out a seat for him

and the boy sat down. The girl fixed a meal and they sat down to
eat. When they sat down to eat, well then
he remembered
(softly) he remembered: "Oh, my grandmother, you gave me
some instructions."
He took off his bow-guard and LOOKED THROUGH IT WHILE HE
ATE.
HE WAS SITTING THERE LOOKING THROUGH HIS BOW-GUARD,
and the householders were laughing. (tight) "Why are you
doing that?" they said
and they were laughing.
Then their father spoke to him: (clearing throat) "Son, why are
you eating that way?" "Well, because MY GRANDMOTHER
TOLD ME
that I should eat this way, that when I ate with my in-laws
I should keep my bow-guard near my eyes, that's what she told
me
and that's why I'm eating this way," he said. "Indeed. So that's
what you were told," they said

and THEY COULDN'T STOP LAUGHING. When the boy was finished:

"I'm going out to pee," he said, and he WENT OUTSIDE TO PEE and

went all the way back to his grandmother.

He ran away.

He entered,

ta laaaaaaa

(tight) "Dear me! grandson, why have you come?" she said.

(excited) "Well, YOU GAVE ME BAD INSTRUCTIONS, for you told me to keep my bow-guard near my eyes while I ate.

I took my bow-guard off and I LOOKED THROUGH IT WHILE I ATE, (pained) and they really couldn't stop laughing, and I was so embarrassed I came home," he said. (clicks tongue)

"Dear me! you big fool.

That's not what I told you, YOU'RE ONLY SUPPOSED TO SHADE YOUR EYES WITH YOUR BOW-GUARD WHILE YOU EAT, YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TAKE IT OFF AND LOOK THROUGH IT."

That's what his grandmother told him. "But I went ahead and TOOK OFF MY BOW-GUARD AND LOOKED THROUGH IT SO I COULDN'T SEE STRAIGHT TO REACH THE FOOD, and that's why

that's why they couldn't stop laughing, and I was so embarrassed I said I wanted to pee, to pee, and when I WENT OUT TO PEE I came back here.

"Dear me! grandson, you weren't supposed to do that, but to keep your bow-guard near your eyes while you ate:

that's the way the SAYING goes."

That's what his grandmother told him. "You must go back."

"Why should I? I made a fool of myself," he said.

THEN HE SPENT THE NIGHT

WITH HIS GRANDMOTHER, and the next day he didn't go to the village.

Those girls

the ones who had wanted to take him home

came down to get water and waited for him, thinking he might
come a second time, but he didn't come, and he still
hadn't come when four days had passed, and
then
he spoke to his grandmother: "Why don't I
go back to the village?"
that's what he said. "Why not, it's
up to you, but don't

(sighing) do anything
that would embarrass you," that's what she said. "No, I
won't," he said.

And then
he took his
little animal skin, which
he used as a kilt, and tied it around his waist. When he had
tied it around, he WENT BACK to the village, and when
he got there, he sat at his usual sitting-place, then one of
them came down and talked to him.
Finally the sun went down
and she took him up with her.
She took him up with her, and when
they entered her house, he greeted them: "My fathers, how
have you been passing the days?" "Happily, our child, so
you've come," they said. "Well, she brought me, that's
why I came," he said, with his hoarse voice.

And then
the one who had brought him fixed a meal.
Then their father spoke:

"Roll up
our child's animal," that's what
he said
that's what he said, and the boy
then remembered
his animal skin.
(low and tight) "Hey, they can't do that, it's my kilt, and if they
roll it up what'll I do for a kilt?
(louder) I must go out to pee," he said, and THE BOY WENT
OUT AND HEADED FOR HIS GRANDMOTHER.

He ran away.
And so

he entered,

ta laaaaaaa

"Dear me! grandson, you big fool, what have you done now?"

"Well, when this girl took me home with her
their father said:

'Roll up

our child's animal, ' and I WANTED THIS ANIMAL SKIN OF MINE
so I came back, " that's what
he said to his grandmother.

"Dear me! you big fool, that's not what he meant, he was
talking about ROASTING SOME MEAT, " that's what

that's what his grandmother told him.

"You should've told me that before. " "GO BACK. " "Well I'm
too embarrassed to go back, it's better for me to stay, "
he said

and he spent the night
with his grandmother, and some days passed, and he didn't go
back.

And when

four days had passed, he went back again, and when
he got to the well, the first one
who had talked to him

came to where he was sitting and said, "Why did you
say you were going out to pee and then
go away? We waited for you but you never came back in, " she
said. "Because, when I
looked through my bow-guard while I ate, you laughed, and I
was so embarrassed I left, " he said.

"So that's why you left. But please don't go away again.

Let's go on up. " "All right

let's go, " he said

and then

the girl got her water and took him to the place he had gone the
first time, and they went in and ate. They ate
and there was another room where the girl slept.

After a time: "Well

let's get some rest, for it's been a long day, " that's what their
father said. The boy was taken into the next room, and then
(softly) the girl made the bed and they both lay down. When the
girl

had fallen asleep, he started feeling her, and then he felt where
her breasts were, her breasts.

He touched them, such hard round lumps
that's what he felt.

(tight) "Hey, you're swelling up, and if you die while I'm
sleeping with you I'll be killed for it. "

AND THEN THE BOY WENT OUT AND RAN AWAY.

He ran all the way back to his grandmother, and his grandmother
scolded him. He told her

how he had felt the girl's body.

"Dear me! you big fool, that's what we're like, " that's what
his grandmother said, and SHE SHOWED HIM HER BREASTS.

"WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THAT BEFORE I WENT? "

(laughing) that's what the boy said.

They slept through the night, and a few days later he went back.

Again he was taken along
he was taken inside, and
when they had eaten, the two of them
lay down.

He felt her again.

But wait, before he had left home his grandmother had given him
instructions:

"Son
when you get married
you must look for the hills, " that's what she had said.

And so he had gone to get married and (softly) they were lying
down, and when

his wife had gone to sleep:

(tight and slow) "Oh, drat! you told me
to look for the hills, and if it's steamy there I should stick my
peeny in, now I remember what you told me. "

It was late at night when the boy walked out on his wife, and then
he went up to the Badger Hills and felt around there, but there
wasn't any STEAMY place, he went around that way until:

"OH NO, I'm going back, you've given me the wrong
instructions. "

It was beginning to get light by the time he got back to his
grandmother's house.

As they went to bed his grandmother questioned him:

"For what reason did you come back? " "Well, you told me
to look for the hills, and I went over to the Badger Hills and
went around all night looking for those hills

and you told me that where it was steamy I should stick my peeny in, (tight) but I've been all over the hills and none of the cracks in the rocks there are steamy, so I came back. "

That's what he told his grandmother.

"That's NOT what I MEANT:

HERE are the hills we have, " that's what she said, his grandmother told him. "Well, I don't want to get married. "

That's what the boy said, and they lived on.

He went down to his field to hoe

and somehow

one girl

found this out and went to where he was HOEING. When she came to where he was hoeing:

"So you've come, " he said. "Yes, I've come" that's, that's what she said. "All right, let's go inside, " he said and he took her into his house.

"My grandmother, how have you been passing the days? "

"Happily, so you've come. " "Yes, I've come, " she said.

"Yes, he was down there

at his field and I spoke to him

and he brought me up here, so we came in, " she said.

Then they fed her and afterwards questioned her. When they questioned her: "Well

I want to marry this child of yours, that's why I thought of coming here

that's why I've come

for we've

already

been together one night

when I brought him up, but for some reason he went away.

He went outside and never came back, and I

was told to come here, so I came, " she said.

"Well, he's such a

fool, so

while you were sleeping he

felt your breasts, and when he touched them
your breasts
felt like hard swellings and he thought you might die while he
was sleeping with you, that's why he left, but I've given
him a talking to. Well, why don't you
go back together? "
That's what she said.
"All right, let's go," that's what the boy said, then she took the
boy out with her
and so
the two of them
entered upon the roads of their elders, and again she brought
him in.
After she brought the boy in (softly) they were lying down again,
and he touched her
cunt, and
it was cracked: (tight) "Hey, someone must've hit you with an
axe, you're badly wounded.
I was told not to go back, but I must go, this shouldn't be."
That's what the boy said, and he WENT OUT and went back to
his grandmother.
His grandmother wasn't asleep yet when he got there:
"Dear me! grandson, what's your reason for scurrying back
here?" "Well, when
my wife
was sleeping I felt her
and SOMEONE MUST'VE HIT HER WITH AN AXE, and there's
SUCH a crack.
WHEN I FOUND OUT I was afraid she'd die while I was
sleeping with her, so I came back." "Dear me! grandson,
that's what we're LIKE," that's what his grandmother said,
and his grandmother (laughing)
showed him her cunt. "Oh well, I didn't want to get married
anyway," that's what he said, "Why didn't you tell me this
before?" "Because it shouldn't be this way, for we value
our bodies. You're such a fool, and because you're such a
fool I had to show you mine," that's what his grandmother
told him. (laughing)
They lived on this way, and because the boy was such a fool he
never got married. This was lived long ago. A——ll
semkonikya. (laughing)