

Thor's Story

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This, I hope, is an interesting and thought provoking prologue to something I once experienced. In my memory it happened only yesterday, rather than 50 years ago.

As a freshman student of aeronautical engineering at the University of Minnesota I had a roommate, and several house members who were my first associates. Among these was a young man studying chemical engineering named Torstein Ewald. He was a farm boy from near Blackduck, a small town in northern Minnesota. He was large, strongly built, with big hands, a mass of red hair that covered his head, his arms, and when he showered in the community shower room, his back, butt, legs and everywhere else on his body.

Thor was bright, ambitious, a good student and very warm hearted. I enjoyed his company, and he mine. For freshman engineering we had many of the same coursework, especially math, physics, and chemistry. We frequently ate together. Often on weekends we would go out together to parties. I had a car and he did not. We were "buddies."

Thor was also a member of a group in the Twin Cities that got together monthly. He wouldn't talk about what they did.

During winter quarter, Thor asked me if he could get a ride home. Since I had a cousin that I wanted to see in Blackduck, I agreed. It was a four hour drive. We were late leaving so we arrived after dark. Thor seemed very nervous as we started north. About 1 ½ hours out, Thor suddenly said "I need to get in the back seat. I need to lie down."

"What's the matter?"

"It's nothing much. I sometimes get this and it will pass."

"Are you sure you're OK?"

"I'm fine." Thor said with a gravely sound in his voice.

I turned to look, but Thor was sitting directly behind me and I couldn't really see him.

The time passed quickly as the full moon caressed the snow covered woods and soon Thor announced to watch for the side road that turns right about a mile ahead. I found it. After about another mile, he said to slow down for we would turn on the left. We wound through a birch thicket, and up a slight rise. We must have wound through the woods for half a mile when we came to a farmstead. The lights of the house were dim, but they came on quickly when I honked. I turned and looked at Thor. What met my eyes struck me with awe and wonder.

Thor was about my height and weight, but, the man that came from my rear seat didn't look like Thor. He was much larger. I came only to his shoulder, if that high. He was huge. He had also

changed clothing. Instead of the normal winter clothing he had been wearing, he now wore a fur vest that really displayed his muscles. His crop of red hair was wild rather than the normal well groomed version I was used to. His arms looked like a large man's legs. Finally, he had one of those big hammers in metal gloved hands, which was like the hammers that are used on carnivals to hit the bell, but it appeared much stronger than one of them. It was metal and had a large rock at the end. I am certain I could not have even lifted it. I just gawked.

"It's OK, Jim. You are just seeing me in a different way. I shall look normal in the morning," Thor told me, somewhat diminishing my terror.

The door to the farmhouse opened and a large man and two women came out. One of the women looked like a teenager; however, Thor had only told me of his brother. As they arrived, they appeared normal (but what was I expecting after the shock of seeing Thor). Thor had spoken of his father, Owen, who had lost an eye in an accident on the farm, and mother, Sarah, along with his brother, Fred. But who was this young woman?

As they came up to the car, Thor's father introduced himself, not as Owen, but as 'Odin'. Then he introduced his wife as 'Sere', and his daughter as 'Freya'. What is going on? I thought to myself.

"Please come in and have dinner with us," Odin said to me.

I did and found a very good repast. The beverage of the meal was a cold glass of honey and goat's milk with a 'kick' that they called 'mead'. We sat and spoke together until I finally asked "Where's Fred?"

With laughter around the table Freya arose reddened slightly and said "Tonight I am Fred."

I was thoroughly confused.

Upon that announcement, they all stood and came over to me. It was very intimidating. They touched me. My head felt like an electric spark had traversed it. As they peered at me, Thor looked relieved, and Odin, Sere and Freya looked pleased.

Odin spoke to me. "Jim, in your maternal family, your grandfather, as was his father before, and his father also for many hundred years, were priests of the eldechirke (Old church) in Wales. Although they took the name of a free church (non-state Christian church) they always included the ancient Druidic practices. Your grandfather taught you many of them."

He went on, "Your paternal ancestry has Native American lineage and in that you came from a line of Berdache shamans. As part of your bloodline, that is also part of who you are today. You do not understand all that I have said, but it is there and it affects you."

"With this background, although you are not fully capable of shape shifting, you are a novice. All Berdaches were capable of shape shifting. This was a principal part of their shamanistic

strength. From this strength, they could bring health and power to their tribal family. You are one of us and need to be taught your full talents that they can be used for good during your life."

Owen/Odin looked at me very seriously and said "Jim, we must ask you to say nothing in the community that will reveal our secret. One night each month, we put on new identities. I am usually known as Owen, my wife as Sarah, and my son/daughter as Fred. And Torstein is always known as Thor. In the morning we shall return to our normal lives."

"Of course I shall only too willingly keep your secret. But what were you saying of teaching me about who and what I am?" I replied.

"Let me explain," Odin responded. "This is not just acting, we are tonight who we are as we are. We are what are known in mythology as 'shape shifters'. Some call us Were's. We are not what you would call Werewolves, although there are some among us who are. You must remember that in our mythology, or actually early history, we honored the wolves. They are only a very few of we Were's. Just as all species have their 'bad apples', we have our Werewolves. As you spend time with Thor, you will discover your own strength in your own time and way. We do not teach, as you know teaching, rather we counsel and answer questions as they come to you. You will always have a relationship with some of us. You are an 'old soul' and already know much of what I have told you. You have just not yet brought it to the surface of your being. It will come."

I could hardly believe what I was hearing. I wanted to escape to my cousin's home, but I was suddenly very tired. I knew it would not be safe for me to drive through the woods of northern Minnesota. Then Odin offered me another drink of goat's milk, and after I had drunk it, I fell asleep.

I awoke, not certain where I was. I heard some noise in the house and arose. I found Owen ready to go out and milk with his teen age son. He introduced him as Fred. I saw no more of Freya on that trip. Thor came down, and looked perfectly normal. His gravely voice was gone. All had returned to normal.

I had found myself in an ancient and enveloping community, a community that is both isolated and ingrown. It is a community of mutual support where every member is important and related to every other member. It resembles, in a way reminiscent of the community of my paternal family. My paternal family lives in a south-eastern Kentucky isolated rural 'holler' and has lived there for over 220 years. When I visit, I find that everyone is my relative, everyone is my friend, and God help anyone who attacks or mistreats anyone of us. The whole community is one of personal support for each of us. And now I found myself a member of an even more ancient and close knit community. It is a community that crossed all lines of tribal and religious pretences. It is also a community of all of mankind, yet one of a real sub-species of mankind.

That was my first experience with Were's. It has not been my last. That is the substance of another story. But, the reality, the power, the antiquity, the curiosity of that sub-species intimates the great possibilities of human development. It provides me with the substance of exciting intellectual stimulation, but yet necessitates great secrecy. Were's are not understood and, usually despised by most of humanity. They refuse to believe any evidence of the validity of the Were's.

I later had many more encounters with Thor and his family. I came to know Owen as an active elder in his local Lutheran Church, a member of his county school board, and a respected farmer in the area. I also came to know Sarah as a very active community volunteer, heading many committees including the county fair women's committee. I found Fred to be a very normal teenage boy, except for about a year later when he/she had spent 21 days as Freya and then had to spend another full week as Freya because of her period.

I must say that Frey (Fred) / Freya had a very interesting life as he / she experienced both sides of the gender gap.

My dictionary defines magic in one definition as 'Possessing distinctive qualities that introduce unaccountable or baffling effects.' That appears to encompass all of life as I know it. No matter what the depth of scientific discoveries I plumb, there are always greater unknowns. How can I dismiss the probability, although perhaps remote, that these fables, myths, stories we have all heard are in no way true? The true magic of life is to believe they may be true and then act as though they are. That emboldens a step into the unknown. That allows me to explore the 'what-ifs' around me.