



# Trying Our Luck – Preparing for a Career and Navigating Through Life with Folk Tales

Guide for the use of the folk tale cards

## A Tale About the Sun

Saami folk tale

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## The tale – A Tale About the Sun

Once there was a great, dark country by the sea. In that country the Sun never rose and its people never once saw sunshine in all of their lives.

A black cloud covered the land and there was so little light that the people could hardly see each other. They called this place the Land of Darkness, and its people were known as hut-dwellers because they had no houses to live in, but only ramshackle huts. These huts were made of straw and covered with tree bark and moss, and it wasn't surprising that the harsh wind blew right through them. The people in the Land of Darkness were very poor indeed.

Nevertheless, in the middle of the country there was a big, round hill and on that hill was a huge forest. In the heart of the forest stood a loghouse and inside that loghouse it was warm and comfortable, and the tables were always laid with the most delicious food and drink. It was the only loghouse in the whole country and in it lived seventy Shadowy Siblings. All around the hill there was a high fence and inside the fence were a hundred thousand reindeer. The Shadowy Siblings didn't make the reindeer work, but all the same, they never let the hut-dwellers have a single one of them.

Life went on like this for a thousand years, and then for another thousand, and then for another thousand after that. The hut-dwellers thought that unless the winter finally came to an end, things would never change.

One day, however, riding on the back of a beautiful reindeer, an old man appeared in the Land of Darkness. His beard grew down to his knees and his eyes shone so brightly that his face could clearly be seen even in the dark. He was as tall as a giant and looked as wise as an owl. As soon as he opened his mouth, the hut-dwellers fell silent.

"My friends! You live in darkness because you don't know what the Sun is. But even though you've never seen it, the Sun exists. And if you can capture a piece of it, your land will become bright and warm."



Of course, the hut-dwellers had never even heard of such a wonderful thing. “What on earth could this ‘Sun’ be?” they asked each other

The Shadowy Siblings also heard the old man talking. As they listened, they became furious and they shouted at the hut-dwellers angrily: “You people are so stupid! Why should you pay any attention to a stranger’s crazy tales? How could anything exist if nobody has ever seen it? The old fake only wants to fool you. You shouldn’t to listen to him, you should beat him black and blue!”

The hut-dwellers thought hard about this. Maybe the Shadowy Siblings were right. Maybe it would be a good idea to kill the stranger.

The wise old man simply stood there shaking his head. Now the light in his eyes had gone out. And then the next moment, he rode away on his magic reindeer and vanished from sight. Only his voice could be heard in the darkness: “After this, I will only appear to those who believe in the Sun.”

Before long, all the hut-dwellers had completely forgotten about the stranger’s visit – all except for one young man, who was very proud and very brave. Although he was as poor as everybody else, this young man never bowed down before the Shadowy Siblings, and one day he walked to a place where thick moss grew as far as the eye could see. As he gazed up at the dark sky, he said to himself: “I do believe the Sun truly exists. But how can I find that wise old man?”

As soon as he had spoken, the moss burst open, and the old man’s magic reindeer appeared before him. “Jump on my back!” it cried.

The young man climbed up onto the reindeer’s back and it carried him away, over the moss and the marshes and the deep, dark lakes until all of a sudden it stopped in front of a huge rock. On top of the rock sat the wise old man.

“Welcome, my boy!” he smiled. “I knew that one of the hut-dwellers would come looking for me. You are a brave young man and you have a great future ahead of you.”



“Thank you,” replied the young man, “but tell me, where can I find a piece of the Sun?”

“You’ve still got a lot of work to do yet. First you have to ask each of the hut-dwellers for a single hair from their heads and then with those hairs you must weave a basket.”

The young man returned home, and he spoke so convincingly that every last one of the hut-dwellers gave him a hair from their head. When he had collected all of the hairs, he began to weave his basket. He worked for seventy days and seventy nights and by the end he had not only managed to weave a tiny basket, he had also grown in strength and wisdom.

The very next day, he went back to the place where the thick moss grew. Once more, he gazed up at the dark sky, and now he said to himself: “My basket is finished. But how can I capture a piece of the Sun?”

As soon as he had spoken, the moss burst open, and the magic reindeer appeared before him for a second time. “Jump on my back!” it cried. The wise young man climbed up onto the reindeer’s back and it carried him away, over the moss and the marshes and the deep, dark lakes.

They had been travelling for a long time when all of a sudden the young man spotted a glowing red light on the horizon – and for the first time in his life, he saw something that all the rest of his people didn’t even believe in: the Sun!

Just then, the magic reindeer spoke. “Aren’t you afraid of fire?” it asked.

“I’m not afraid of anything!” answered the young man.

“Then open up your basket and hold on to it tightly – and hold on to me too!”

The young man did as he was told, and the next moment they raced off towards the horizon. Gathering speed, the magic reindeer ran straight into the Sun, pricking it with its antlers so that a piece came off and fell into the basket.

Then they immediately turned back and hurried straight to the Land of Darkness. The moment they got there, the magic reindeer disappeared.



The wise young man stood before the hut-dwellers and spoke to them: “You all gave me one of your hairs. I wove a basket from them and in that basket I captured a piece of the Sun and brought it home to you. Now we must let the Sun out of the basket so that it can light up the sky!”

Just as he said this, however, he heard shouting behind him. He spun around and saw the Shadowy Siblings hurrying down from their hill. They were shaking their fists and yelling angrily: “Don’t you dare! You mustn’t let the Sun out of your basket! Our lakes will dry out. The iron in the belly of the Earth will melt and flood our homes. You’ll be blinded and we will all be burned alive!”

Before he could get away, the Shadowy Siblings had surrounded the young man, trying to snatch the basket from him. Now the hut-dwellers started shouting too: “Leave him alone! That basket’s ours!”

Red in the face with rage, the Shadowy Siblings grabbed hold of the young man and began dragging him towards the marsh. When they saw that the Siblings were planning to drown both the young man and the Sun in his basket, for the first time in their lives the hut-dwellers rose up. The next moment, a thunderstorm of stones rained down on the bullies’ heads, but in reply the Shadowy Siblings took out sharpened fishbones and started to stab the hut-dwellers. The fighting was fierce and bloody.

Just as he was about to be pushed into the water, the young man threw the basket high in the air. As it sailed over the battlefield, the basket’s lid flew open, and the first of the Sun’s rays came streaming out.

A glowing red light filled the sky as dawn broke over the land. The Shadowy Siblings all burned to death and while their ashes disappeared into the marsh, the young man and the hut-dwellers stood gazing up at the dazzling sunshine with huge smiles on their faces.

The water of the deep, dark lakes turned blue; the dull moss turned red, white, yellow and green. A miracle had come to the Land of Darkness.



Now the young man was surrounded again – but this time by happy hut-dwellers. “Who are you?” they cried. “Who is the wise man who has brought us this miracle?”

“Now do you believe that the Sun truly exists?” asked the young man.

“We do!” they shouted. “But you’ve given us only a tiny piece of it. How can we capture the whole thing?”

As they said this, the moss burst open and the magic reindeer appeared. It said something to the young man and then he turned and spoke to the hut-dwellers: “Go to the hill. Pull down the Shadowy Siblings’ fence. Herd up all the reindeer. They are yours now.”

The hut-dwellers did just as he had told them. First they destroyed the fence and then they each brought one of the hundred thousand reindeer down from the hill. When they were all there, the wise young man jumped onto the back of the magic reindeer. “Mount up and follow me!” he called.

They rode over the moss and the marshes and the lakes, and when they had finally reached the Sun, the young man turned to the hut-dwellers. “Aren’t you afraid of fire?” he asked.

“We’re not afraid of anything,” they replied. “Just tell us how to capture the Sun!”

“Ride towards it with an open heart and let a ray of its light enter you.”

So the hut-dwellers rode towards the Sun with their hearts open wide. They each let a ray of sunlight enter them and their hundred thousand hearts grew suddenly warm.

“Now line your reindeer up,” said the young man.

When they were ready, the magic reindeer pricked the Sun with its antlers and the Sun slid down from the sky and settled on the antlers of all the other reindeer. The hundred thousand hut-dwellers rode home very carefully carrying the Sun before them.

Since that day, the Sun has been shining red over the land. The lakes are blue and the hut-dwellers catch fish in the sparkling water. Where once were marshes, there are now brightly coloured flowers and green grass. Endless forests whisper on the seashore.



The wise young man still lives. And he will never die, because he was the one who brought the miracle of the Sun to the Land of Darkness.





## Guide to the tale

In order to work successfully with a folk tale, it is important to understand who the hero of the story is, and to identify the life situation or problem for which the plot provides an opportunity for solution. 'A Tale About the Sun' is a special story because among other things it simultaneously offers the possibility of change on both individual and social levels. We start our journey in the Land of Darkness, where a state of learned helplessness, a 'frozenness' prevails. The inhabitants of this land, the hut-dwellers, live in miserable conditions, with no particular worldview or prospects for future improvement. This state has defined their lives for a long time.

As the tale says, *Life went on like this for a thousand years, and then for another thousand, and then for another thousand after that.* When someone is born into a world without light and brightness, and grows up without ever having heard about the Sun, it is hard to believe that life could be different and to even imagine the existence of such things as joy, peace, satisfaction, or freedom from hunger. So when a stranger arrives bringing news of another, wonderful and attainable quality of life, no matter how powerful, wise, and charismatic he may be, the hut-dwellers ultimately do not believe him.

They rather listen to the Shadowy Siblings, who among other things can be seen as symbols of darkness, hopelessness, and being trapped in an impossible life situation, and who embody everything that prevents us from utilising our inner resources.

This is a strange situation, because viewing the events of the tale from another angle, we can see that all the information and knowledge the hut-dwellers need in order to "capture the Sun" is readily available to them, and to gain access to it, 'all' they need to do is somehow destroy the Shadowy Siblings. Yet simply hearing about the existence of the Sun is not enough.

Among the hut-dwellers lives a proud and brave young man. He is the only one who doesn't forget the old man and has the faith, courage, and persistence to set out on a journey that will



ultimately change the life of the entire community. What makes him different from the others? What are the qualities which only he possesses that make him suitable for this difficult, long, and exhausting task? One of his most basic characteristics is that, despite his miserable circumstances, he refuses to establish any connection with the Shadowy Siblings.

If we start from the perspective that every character in the tale represents a part of ourselves, we can say that the hut-dwellers are those aspects of ourselves that have been somehow wounded during our lives, while the young man represents the inner voice, the part of ourselves that can get us out of trouble and help us to find the best way for ourselves. In other words, it can help in healing and integrating those parts of ourselves that we have become detached from due to difficult life situations, traumas, or abuse.

This young man is the only one who believes the old man when he claims that the Sun exists; the only one who does not listen to the forces that hold him back; the only one who is not trapped by the familiar and accustomed negativity. It is he who takes the risk of embarking into the unknown and, instead of getting stuck in a bad life situation, chooses to be proactive.

When given the task by the old man to return home and collect a hair from each of the hut-dwellers in order to weave a basket, the young man completes the task without protest or doubt. This is another very significant moment in the story, since it is crucial in order for the hut-dwellers to later stand up for themselves against their oppressors. While asking for the strands of hair, the young man needs to talk to every single person. To do this, he needs to learn and practice an empathic and genuinely attentive form of communication. These hairs – that is, these encounters and conversations – transform our protagonist and also gather the strength and knowledge of the community. Together, the community's knowledge and the young man's painstaking work create a basket suitable for capturing a piece of the Sun and bringing it back to the Land of Darkness.

This is the process that is potentially the hut-dwellers' first step towards change. And it is one of the moments in the tale showing how individual change can be accompanied by transformation on the level of the community itself. If we wish to open up a new path for a



community, we can succeed if we ourselves become part of that community and if we can bring a collective knowledge to the surface and give form to it. This is what happens during the seventy days and nights that the young man works on the basket. It is no wonder that by the end, he has “grown in strength and wisdom” – alongside the basket, his knowledge, his character, and his inner strength were all shaped and changed during this time. And speaking of time, this is a process that can only be brought to fruition when we dedicate sufficient quality time to it and work tirelessly and persistently.

Once the young man has woven the basket, another challenge arises: to ride the magic reindeer to the Sun and return with a piece of it. On one hand, the reindeer is a symbol of mobility and action, but it can also represent the resources that help us through the difficulties that the young man in the story has to overcome. It is a very beautiful and perhaps not unintentional metaphor of this tale that the hero is given a wonderful, supernaturally powerful animal helper from the Land of Darkness. After all, in a country without light and warmth, the living world cannot grow, flourish, and survive. We are unable to connect with living, breathing nature, which can provide the energy and strength we experience when we get away from our daily lives to go on holiday by the sea, hike in the forest, or simply take a walk in a nearby park. How uplifting it is that in a tale like this, it is an animal that can help revive the land and lead not only the community but also the whole of the natural world towards renewal and flourishing.

In order to bring back a piece of the Sun, only one skill is needed: to be able to fearlessly run straight towards this totally new, entirely unknown celestial phenomenon. And the young man has no fear. That is how he manages to bring a handful of the Sun’s rays to the hut-dwellers – yet in itself, this is not enough to bring about radical change. As long as the Shadowy Siblings are alive, a complete transformation cannot take place. When the young man tells the hut-dwellers what he did with their hairs, another important step towards achieving community change is taken. We don’t know whether or not the others actually believe in the



existence of the Sun, but they certainly consider the young man to be “one of their own” and they fight fiercely to protect him and his basket.

Now the Shadowy Siblings can no longer employ their tactics of deception and division, which caused the hut-dwellers to throw away the opportunity presented by the old man. In fact, when they realise this, they attack the young man, leading to another significant step in the life of the community: the hut-dwellers go to war with the Shadowy Siblings. The fighting is fierce and desperate – and if we stop for a moment and take a look at our own lives, are there any of us who are not familiar with this bitter struggle with our personal difficulties? What is odd – and thought-provoking – is the fact that, as it turns out, this struggle does not actually achieve any results: it does not destroy the Shadowy Siblings.

In the course of events, the lid of the basket flies open, the first ray of sunlight bursts out, and as it lights up the sky, the Shadowy Siblings burn to ashes. It is the light brought forth from within ourselves through power and knowledge that can eliminate the frozenness, the self-doubt, and the darkness – all the feelings and qualities that the Shadowy Siblings represent. From this point on, now that the Sun’s rays have shown the hut-dwellers the possibility of a new quality of life, everything goes smoothly. Following the guidance of the young man and his magical helper, they release all the reindeer hitherto trapped by the Shadowy Siblings and eventually bring back the entire Sun on the animals’ antlers. Their country ceases to be the Land of Darkness. Nature regains its beauty and richness, and the lives and hearts of the hut-dwellers are filled with light and joy.

### [The narrative of our relationship with nature](#)

This story is about narratives. We are all surrounded by narratives. When we hear the word “nature”, several different memories, emotions, and values are activated. These stories and emotions together make up narratives which shape the way we think about ourselves and our environment, and indeed influence the way we act and behave.



Existing narratives also formulate our inner narratives. When we listen to another person's story, watch a film, or listen to a poem or song, the emotions summoned up are good indicators of the impact it will have on our internal narratives. Stories come from all different directions, most of which we cannot control. On the other hand, as teachers or coaches we still can control some of them, and also create a way to associate them with good feelings. That is why working with stories and storytelling has such a deep impact on individuals.

The folk tale in question is very much about internal narratives – the struggle within us between the narrative of darkness and hopelessness and the narrative of light, bravery and the Sun. However, this story also shows a different way to connect with nature, as most folk tales do. In folk tales there is no alienation from nature: other creatures, even imaginary ones, are equally as important actors as humans (and sometimes they are even more important!). If we study folk tales, we can see that people live in peace with nature, and if they fail to do so, they face severe consequences (dragons, storms, rings around the sun, or the wrath of the sea).

In 'A Tale About the Sun', we see that at the beginning, the hut-dwellers are shut off from the natural world. All they experience is darkness and cold, and they aren't even aware of the existence of the Sun (nature's chief driving force). They are also separated from the reindeer, which are the mobility tool between them and the Sun. From this perspective, the story is very clear – for a sustainable life (of light, warmth, colour, and flourishing) we need to reconnect to nature, which in this case is represented by animals.

In the mythology of the Saami peoples (from whom this tale originates) there is a constant war between the Dark side (of the Moon) and the Light side (the Sun), and the reindeer are fighting on the Sun side. Reindeer are important partners for the Saami, who nowadays are full time reindeer-herders.

In our everyday narratives, animals are either a source of food, pets, or actors in wildlife documentaries. They belong to a different world; we sometimes even give the word Nature a



capital “N”. We admire these creatures’ beauty, but in most cases we think of them as objects to either eat or protect.

From a different point of view, though, they are just as much a part of nature as we are. They are living their lives, and from their perspective, we might be kind caretakers or ruthless predators. The magic reindeer in this story lives in the forest; however, it is also connected to the people. It is only the magic reindeer that can take the young man to the Sun, and only all of the reindeer together can capture the Sun and carry it home to the people. It is only with their help that the world becomes colourful, uplifting, and pleasant again. We should pay close heed to this message.



## Working with the tale on our own

Working through a story on our own is an exciting experience, but it is not at all straightforward. In folk tales, order is restored by the end; the heroes go on a journey, and through that they develop.

This is our task too – to interpret the turns and ‘codes’ of the folk tale for our own lives, to find the steps that will help us to become better masters and mistresses of our own lives.

When we begin to work through ‘A Tale About the Sun’, we should first listen to or read the story and then sit back and let the mood of the tale wash over us. Even with our eyes closed, we can find a taste, a smell, or an image from the story. What would we take from the story if we could? Where in the story are we, and what role are we playing?

Then we should take a pencil and write down our answers to the questions (on the cards or in the text here). We should focus on the questions that speak to us the most. Not all questions may be relevant to us, but those that are, are worth thinking about at length, or even talking about with others – parents, friends, peers, or even helpers.

In what way does this happen? Probably some character, place, or object captures our imagination. The elements in a folk tale do not necessarily mean the same thing to everyone, and in fact, when we work on the story on our own, we interpret the situations, characters, etc. that appear in it completely for ourselves.

Let us first look at the characters in the story. Each character has their own strengths, their own role, and their own message. The characters’ cards bear these messages.

- ❖ The hut-dwellers have lived in the Land of Darkness for three thousand years and they have never once seen sunshine. Their lives are miserable. Their homes, physical, material, and emotional states are just enough to survive. In conditions such as these, a way out is hard to imagine, and the hut-dwellers are of the same opinion: they think



things will never change. Have we ever been in a similar situation ourselves? How did we feel? What did we do? When the Shadowy Siblings raise their voices, not even the wise and charismatic old man who appears on a beautiful reindeer can change the hut-dwellers' outlook. And to capture the whole of the Sun, the active participation of everyone in the community is needed. The proud and brave young man manages to forge a bond with them that helps them to take a step forward: they believe the Sun exists and confront the Shadowy Siblings. What do we personally need to be able to face our fears, blockages, and self-doubt?

- ❖ The Shadowy Siblings can also represent qualities that in some way obstruct change. What are the qualities within us, the inner voices that do the same to us? These siblings live on a hilltop in a loghouse with lights and heat. While they keep the reindeer inside the fence, they don't actually use them in any way – they don't herd them and make them work, they simply keep them away from the hut-dwellers. Have we ever been in a situation where someone had something we needed but we couldn't get it? How did we feel? What did we do? Are there 'Shadowy Siblings' around us who are holding us back?
- ❖ The wise old man is one of the young man's helpers in the story. His appearance inspires respect and admiration. When he arrives and announces the existence of the Sun, everyone listens attentively until the Shadowy Siblings intervene. Unfortunately, the hut-dwellers ultimately ignore the old man. Have we ever been in a situation where we were right but others didn't believe us? How did we feel and what did we do? The hut-dwellers' reaction does not change the fact that the old man, thanks to his vast experience, knows how to reach life's joys and resources. And he passes this knowledge on to all those who believe in the existence of the Sun. Have we ever had an encounter that had a great impact on us? Why was this so? Who do we listen to? Whose advice do we seek and take? Do others listen to us?
- ❖ The hero of the tale is the proud and brave young man. Although he is one of the hut-dwellers, there is a fundamental difference between him and the others: he has never





had any contact with the Shadowy Siblings. The others bow down before the siblings; however, despite his miserable circumstances, the young man does not. Making the basket is a long and arduous task, and he does it with humility, patience, and persistence. He approaches the hut-dwellers with care, concern, openness, and empathy. He believes that his life can be better than it is now. Is there a part of us that believes this? How can we strengthen this inner voice?

- ❖ The magic reindeer is another helper of the young man and, among other things, a symbol of mobility. It is the one who leads him to the old man and then to the Sun itself. What are our own internal and external resources that lead us to our goals and that fill us with joy? We can print out the outline of the magic reindeer and colour it, writing on its antlers everything that makes us happy, and on its hooves the qualities we need to be able to experience this joy.

We can also study the various locations in the tale. In which setting can we find ourselves? Each scene presents its own tasks, which we have to perform in order to arrive at the next way station.

- ❖ A black cloud covers the Land of Darkness. There is so little light that the hut-dwellers can barely see each other. Thinking about it, when it is dark, a lot of things are more complicated than at other times. It can be more difficult to perceive the passage of time and it is easier to lose our physical balance, but it is also possible that our sense of security is damaged. Beyond the physical interpretation, the Land of Darkness might also be a symbol of the fact that we cannot see the way ahead, that we don't have a vision for the future, or cannot connect to the intuitive element within ourselves. Have we ever felt in great darkness in our lives? What characterised this period (what feelings, what physical sensations)? What helped us in this life situation?
- ❖ The young man, who believes in the existence of the Sun, sets out to find the wise old man and ask for his guidance. His first action is to go to the place where the thick moss grows (a feeding site for wild reindeer). "I do believe the Sun truly exists," he says to



himself. “But how can I find that wise old man?” This may seem like meaningless thinking out loud, but it is an important moment: it states and makes clear the young man’s belief in and commitment to change. As a result, the magic reindeer appears and helps him to locate the old man. Do we have any helpers? What is the first step in finding them? The reindeer takes the young man to a huge rock, where he meets the old man. He listens to the wise stranger and takes his advice. Returning home, he sets about the tiring, lengthy task of making the basket. Who do we find genuine? Who do we trust? Why?

- ❖ When the basket is finished, the young man returns to the place where the thick moss grows and the magic reindeer carries him on its back to the Sun. Before running up and using its antlers to capture a piece of the Sun, it asks the young man, “Aren’t you afraid of fire?” How do we feel about that question? How do we cope with fear and doubt? We should write down our fears and burn them in the flame of a candle.
- ❖ Capturing a piece of the Sun alone does not bring the first rays of light to the Land of Darkness. The Shadowy Siblings want to discredit our protagonist in the same way as they did the old man. When this method fails, they try to drown both the young man and the Sun in his basket. A fierce fight begins, which ends only by chance – when the young man throws the basket into the air, the first of the Sun’s rays appear and burn the Shadowy Siblings to ashes. We should think about the factors and qualities that prevent good things from happening around us and within us. How are these ‘Shadowy Siblings’ fighting against us? How can we fight them? What can help us to overcome our inner doubts and fears?
- ❖ With the destruction of the Shadowy Siblings and the bringing of the Sun, the Land of Darkness is flooded with light. The warmth and the light immediately produce their beneficial effects: the landscape becomes bright and fertile, and it flourishes. And as the physical environment is changed, so the hearts of the hut-dwellers are filled with this brightness. How do we ourselves relate to the natural world? How can we strengthen this connection? We should think about how we want to live our everyday



life. What have we already achieved and what are the next steps we ought to take? How can we maintain our inner peace? Which activities, ways of behaving, and tools can help this?

When we work by ourselves with the tale, we can start from several directions, and there is no single, linear approach. Although the locations and the tasks that appear in the story are presented in a deliberate order, we can work on the other themes in roughly any sequence.

Reaching the conclusion of a folk tale doesn't always happen that quickly. The processes and events that the protagonist goes through do not happen overnight. It is therefore important that we also respect our own personal pace. This is a tale that we can work with for years. The important thing is to revisit it from time to time and see how far we have come.



## Working with the tale as a coach

When we want to work with the story as a coach, the first step is to work with the story ourselves – that is, to think through the steps detailed in the previous section.

Before we start working with the story as a coach, it is necessary to have a subjective interpretation of the tale, an interpretation of the story as it applies to our own personal life, because it is very important to avoid imposing our own interpretation on our clients. To do this, we need to know what our own interpretation is. On the other hand, it is also important to interpret the folk tale in relation to our own lives, so that we do not run into questions and topics that trigger an emotional reaction in us while working with the client.

At the same time, however, we also need to interpret the story objectively, and to think through the possible interpretations from the client's point of view.

Ildikó Boldizsár calls these two approaches the 'objective and subjective story matrix'. In the objective matrix, we interpret the story itself, while in the subjective matrix we examine ourselves in the light of the story.

The objective matrix of 'A Tale About the Sun' is as follows:

- ❖ Who is the hero of the tale? – The protagonist is a young man who believes in the existence of the Sun. But in a way, we can also see the hut-dwellers as heroes, since they too undergo a major change in the course of the story.
- ❖ What is the life situation? – The people are living a helpless, frozen, dark, cold, and miserable life.
- ❖ What is the challenge of the tale? – The question in the tale is whether or not the Sun can be brought to the Land of Darkness. In the language of self-knowledge: can we go from a state of learned helplessness to a state of gaining agency/control?
- ❖ Who is the adversary? – The destruction of the Shadowy Siblings is a necessary moment for the hut-dwellers to be able to set out to obtain the entire Sun. Fear, self-



doubt, a sense of hopelessness, and being stuck in a negative life situation may all be factors that prevent us from capturing the light.

- ❖ Who/what are the helpers? – As is customary in folk tales, the young man is not without help. He has two allies in the form of the magic reindeer and the old man. What's more, at a certain point, when the hut-dwellers resolve to capture the entire Sun, he himself becomes the helper.
- ❖ What is the solution? – To reconnect with nature (the reindeer) in order to reach the Sun.

The subjective matrix of 'A Tale About the Sun' is as follows:

- ❖ Who am I in the story? – We may identify with the young man, but in a folk tale, the hero is not always the one closest to us. It is also possible that a hut-dweller, the old man, or even a Shadowy Sibling grabs us the most. Each of these characters can be a step towards a deeper self-knowledge or a way of dealing with a life situation that can shed fresh light on a new point of view. We should not be afraid of any of the characters. The point is to look carefully at why we can best identify with the one we have chosen.
- ❖ Where am I in the story? – One thing is for sure: I can't be in a place where the character I identify with hasn't been. When I find the place I feel like I am in, it's worth looking around and thinking about the next question.
- ❖ What is my role here? – The easiest way to find this out is to look at what is happening in the story at the place we identified above and to try to interpret what these events symbolise for us. Can we draw parallels between our own life and the events in the story? After we have done this, it is also worth thinking about the following questions.
- ❖ What is my own internal adversary that I must overcome in order to move forward?
- ❖ What is my inner help, my own resources for change?
- ❖ What object would I take from the story for myself?
- ❖ What is the very specific thing I need to do to move forward in this situation?



After a thorough reflection on the tale, we can begin to work on it with our clients. If we are working with a client in an individual process, the main question is really where to start, considering in what place and at what stage of development our client is. We might have already ascertained this during prior conversations, but we may give them the story, or they may listen to it and determine this for themselves.

Then, based on the client's interpretation and the interpretations made in previous sessions, we should go through the questions formulated in the previous sessions and on the cards during the facilitation process, which may sometimes take several sessions. Not all questions need to be worked with, some are relevant, others less so. It is possible that new questions will arise from the questions on the cards, and we will move on from there. The cards mainly feature questions, however sometimes there is a specific problem to solve.

Sometimes we may come across a topic that is no longer within the scope of the current story. We can then continue with another story and return to this one later.

The aims of the process are for clients to develop and apply effective strategies for relieving anxiety, for them to discover the roots of their anxieties, and finally for them to let those anxieties go.

In the following are suggestions on how to engage with the story with young people in groups as well.



## A possible scenario for a group activity

**The purpose of the folk tale work group:** To discover and mobilise inner resources; to prepare clients to take control of their lives and activate their creative powers. To make the participants reflect on their relationship with the natural world.

**Target age group:** Young people aged 18-23 (possibly older), still only partially independent from their parents.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Number of participants: No more than 20.

### Preparation of the venue:

The setting for the story group should be prepared according to the atmosphere of the tale. It is important that participants can sit in a circle – perhaps not on chairs, but on cushions. There should be a clear point of entry, which could be the door of the room, but if this is not possible, or if the room is too large, then a ‘gateway’ should be set up.

There should be sufficient but not too much lighting. If there are tables, we should place them by the wall; they can be useful for individual work later. If there are no tables, we need to bring drawing boards or folders for the participants to write or draw on.

Next to the ‘gateway’, already inside the space, we place symbol cards that the participants can choose from when they enter, before they sit down. These can be OH cards, Dixit cards, or even a personal collection of pictures or postcards – the main thing is that they depict different situations and feelings, and that there should be at least one and a half to two times more cards than participants so that everyone can choose freely.

In the centre of the circle, it is worth putting a colourful shawl, or perhaps a flower or a symbol related to the story. In the case of A ‘Tale About the Sun’, we could lay out a dark cloth,



and then place a bright circular bowl in the middle to symbolise the Sun. (We can choose, inspired by our own creativity).

Outside the circle, close to the group leader, we place any other desired props, including the folk tale cards, and the printed handouts for colouring and writing on.

If storytelling is done using video, the computer, projector, screen/wall surface, and speakers should also be prepared and tested so as not to hinder the process.

If the group is already in the room before we start, we should ask everyone to leave, and only lay out the symbol cards, shawl, symbols, etc. when the group is waiting outside.

Tools needed:

A shawl or piece of material for the centre of the circle, decorative items, symbol cards, drawing boards if needed, pens, coloured pencils, drawing equipment, the folk tale cards, and enough copies of the handouts for each participant.

Possibly: a computer, projector, screen/wall space, speakers.

Script:

(timings are approximate, being dependent on the size of the group)

## 1. Entrance

Duration: 5 minutes

We allow the participants to enter, preferably one at a time, and give each of them the following task:

“Have you ever found yourself in a situation when everything was dark and desperate? Choose a card that represents this situation in your life.”





When everyone has made their choice and is seated, we can join in.

## 2. Getting in the mood

Duration: 10-15 minutes

We discuss the cards chosen by the participants. We shouldn't go round in a circle and not everyone necessarily has to share their card. When everyone who wishes to do so has spoken, we can discuss ways to solve a desperate or frightening situation, and explore why many people are afraid of change.

During the conversation, we can ask the participants the following questions:

- ❖ Have you ever been in a desperate or frightening situation?
- ❖ In that situation, were you able to get yourself to change or were you too afraid?
- ❖ What were you afraid of?
- ❖ What did other people tell you? How did they react?
- ❖ Who or what (if anything) helped you to change?

## 3. Storytelling

Duration: approx. 10 minutes

When similar stories have been told and we continue with this particular tale, we should provide the following introduction:

"Once there was a country where everyone lived in darkness. Would you like to hear its story?"

The storytelling should preferably be done by ourselves, in our own words, because in this way we can maintain contact with the participants. If we cannot tell the story personally, we can read it aloud or listen to a recording/watch a video of the tale.



If we are telling the story ourselves, before it begins, we might ask the participants to close their eyes and concentrate on their breathing. When everyone is focused, we can start.

We can also use a musical instrument (e.g. koshi chimes, a kalimba, or a sansula) to put the participants in the mood for the storytelling experience.

At the end of the story, we again ask the participants to close their eyes and, allowing enough time for their own internal imagery to be activated, we give them the following tasks:

- ❖ Pick a colour from the story!
- ❖ Pick a smell from the story!
- ❖ Pick an object from the story!
- ❖ Look around you, where are you in the story? What surrounds you, who is near you?

#### 4. Processing

Duration: 35-40 minutes

After everyone has returned from the story, we discuss who has taken what from the story, what landscape they found themselves in. Answering is not obligatory; the participants can volunteer to speak if they wish to. Regarding the locations, we can ask the participants what the task in that particular place is.

Then (or in the meantime, as appropriate) we can discuss some questions:

- ❖ What might the Shadowy Siblings represent?
- ❖ Why did the hut-dwellers ignore the old man, but not the young man?



We should then distribute the drawing equipment and handouts and leave a little time for individual work.

The first handout shows the magic reindeer. While they are colouring the outline, the participants can note down (or at least think about) their responses to the following question:

- ❖ What are your internal and external resources that bring you closer to your goals and fill you with joy?

After a short period of individual work (or while it is still in progress), we invite those participants who wish to, to share what they have written.

The second topic is about becoming wise. This is represented by the basket. Here we can talk about how wise the young man actually became and how he grew to be a leader. Why is the basket necessary for strength and wisdom? How and why did the young man grow in strength and wisdom while making the basket? What can the participants get from other people – both mentally and physically? What do ‘strength’ and ‘wisdom’ mean to them personally?

While they are colouring the outline, we can ask the participants to write the following:

- ❖ In the basket: ‘My personal leadership qualities’.
- ❖ Around the basket: ‘The skills and qualities I still need to gain’.

After a short period of individual work (or while it is still in progress), we invite those participants who wish to, to share what they have written.

The third and last topic is the bright future. We distribute the Sun outline, which also symbolises reconnecting with the natural world.

While the participants are colouring, a discussion can be started about how the hut-dwellers and how we personally connect to the natural world. What things could we improve?



## 5. Closure / Exit

When our time is up, some people will still be working. We conclude the session by asking everyone to leave the story space within a few minutes. We walk through the 'gateway' and meet whoever is ready to leave, one by one.

There, we ask the given person if they would like to show us their picture of the basket (it is not obligatory), and we ask about the first thing they will do in order to move one of the items that are outside into the basket itself.