***The Woman Who Fell from the******Sky***

*from an Iroquois Creation story*

In the beginning, in the Sky World, a pregnant wife asked her husband to fetch the delicacies she craved. But she wanted the bark of a root of the Great Tree in the middle of the Sky World, which none were permitted to touch. Finally, however, he gave in, and scraped away soil to bare the root of the Tree. Underneath was a hole, and as the woman peered down into it, she fell through. The birds helped transport her as she fell, and the great Sea Turtle received her on his back. Here, on the Sea Turtle's back, she planted bits of the roots and plants she had brought from the Sky World. And she walked across the turtle's back, planting, praying and creating the Earth that we know as Turtle Island.

The woman who had fallen from the sky then had a daughter, who became impregnated by the West Wind. While in the womb, the daughter's unborn twins began to quarrel about how they should emerge, the left-handed twin refusing to be born in the usual way. Instead, he forced himself out of his mother's left armpit, killing her as a result. The newborn twins then buried their mother, who became Corn Mother, source of corn, beans and squash, the Three Sisters of the Iroquois. From her heart grew sacred tobacco, used to send messages and thanks to the Sky World.

The two brothers continued to compete with each other as they created the animals and plants, and in the process, represented different ways of living. Right-Handed Twin created the beautiful hills, lakes, blossoms, gentle creatures; Left-Handed Twin, the jagged cliffs and whirlpools, thorns and predators. Right-Handed Twin was always truthful, reasonable, goodhearted, and "straight-arrow";  Left-Handed Twin lied, fought, rebelled and made "crooked" choices.

Because Right-Handed Twin created human beings, he is known as  "Our Creator," and "The Master of  Life." But Left-Handed Twin helped, and invented rituals of sorcery and healing. The world they built included both cooperation and competition, loving kindness and aggression.

After they finished their creations, the continued to compete in other ways - by gambling, by playing lacross, then fighting with clubs.  One day, grasping a deer antler, Right-handed Twin finally prevailed, and killed his brother, throwing the body of Left-Handed Twin over the edge of the earth. As a result, Right-Handed Twin rules day and the Sky-World and Left-Handed Twin prevails over night and the lower world.

Grandmother Skywoman was furious that Right-Handed Twin murdered his brother, and accused him of wrongdoing. Angry, and believing that grandmother had always favored the errant Left- Handed Twin, he cut off her head and threw it up toward the sky, where it became the Moon. Then he threw her body into the ocean, where it became all the fish of the sea.

The Iroquois believe that both Left-Handed Twin and Right- Handed Twin are necessary for the world to be in balance. During festivals, day activities honor Right-Handed Twin, and night activities such as feasting, singing and dancing honor Left-Handed Twin. This tension and struggle for balance between the two brothers and principles of life is  incorporated into Iroquois festivals and cycles of life.