

Mike Ness

"The Song Of Hiawatha"

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By the shore of gitche gumee
By the shining big-sea-water
At the doorway of the wigwam
In the early summer morning

Hiawatha stood and waited
All the air was full of freshness
All the earth was bright and joyous
And before him through the sunshine

Westward toward the neighbouring forest
Passed in golden swams, the ahmo
Passed the bees, the honey-makers
Burning, singing in the sunshine

Bright above him shone the heavens
Level spread the lake before him;
From it's bosom leaped the sturgeon
Sparkling, flashing in the sunshine

On it's margin the great forest
Stood reflected in the water
Every tree-top had it's shadow
Motionless beneath the water

From the bow of hiawatha
Gone was every trace of sorrow
As the fog from off the water
As the mist of the meadow

With a smile of joy and gladness
With a look of exultation
As of one who in a vision
Sees what is to be, but is not

Stood and waited hiawatha
Toward the sun his hands were lifted
Both the palms spread out towards it
And between the parted fingers

Feel the sunshine on his features

Flecked with light his naked shoulders
As it falls and flecks an oak-tree
Through the rifted leaves and branches

O'er the water floating, flying
Something in the hazy distance
Something in the mist of morning
Loomed and lifted from the water
Now seemed floating, now seemed flying
Coming nearer, nearer, nearer
Was it shingebis, the diver?
Or the pelican, the shada?

Or the heron, the shuh-shuh-gah?
Or the white goose, waw-be-wawa,
With the water dripping, flashing
From it's glossy neck and feathers?

It was neither goose or diver
Neither pelican nor heron
O'er the water floating, flying
Through the shining mist of morning

But a birch canoe with paddles
Rising, sinking in the sunshine
Dripping, flashing in the sunshine
And within it came a people

Can it be the sun descending
O'er the level plain of water
Or the red swan floatin, flying
Wounded by the magic arrow

Staining all the waves with crimson
With the crimson of it's lifeblood
Filling all the air with splendour
Filling all the air with plumage

Yes, it is the sun descending
Sinking down into the water
All the sky is stained with purple
All the water flushed with crimson!

No, it is the red swan floating
Diving down beneath the water
To the sky it's wings are lifted
With it's blood the waves are reddened!

Over it the star of evening
Melts and trembles through the purple
Hangs suspended in the twilight

Walks in silence through the heavens!

(h. w. longfellow. vocals: maddy prior)

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