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Dragonfly Saying

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Darline DeBry
Logan, UT
December 4, 2017

“Dragonfly Saying” Folk Belief

Informant: Darline DeBry is my mother. She is in her mid 50s and is currently living in Ferron, Utah. She originally grew up in Magna, Utah but about 25 years ago my family moved to Emery County and she calls Ferron home. She just recently graduated with her Masters Degree in School Counseling and is currently a counselor at Emery High. She is the mother of 5 children, grandmother of 1, and hopes to see her family grow a lot more in the next couple of years. My father passed away 8 years ago and she hasn't remarried, nor has had the desire to remarry since. Her time is focused primarily on work, her new grandson, children, and her new dog. She loves crafting, working outside, helping teenagers adjust to life, and playing solitaire.

Context: Grandma Macel Beagley would say it to my mom growing up. She remembers worrying about her dad and brothers because they cursed a lot and she didn't want them to get their lips sewed shut. Darline was never really one to swear or say naughty things, she was mostly worried about others who would. She was really little, probably 4 or 5 years old when she remembers hearing it first. She doesn't remember where Macel got the saying from, perhaps from her daughter-in-law, Vayoma, my mom's mom. Vayoma is often the one that would make up sayings to teach the children what to do and what not to do. Darline would most likely hear it when they were picking asparagus on May Day along the ditches in the field with Grandma Macel, when the dragonflies were out the most. She would be especially wary and would warn others when they were around dragonflies. She would even tell the kids at school to be careful. As she got older and raised her children, Darline continued the saying, more as a matter of fact statement and warning rather than an actual story or legend about Grandma Macel. When we were outside, it was just something she would say to us if we said a bad word or if she saw a dragonfly flying around. It was never really clear how the dragonfly would sew people's mouths shut other than their tails looked like needles and would somehow make a thread that would sew the lips together. I do remember a few times when Mom would swear or say something naughty she would look around and say to us, "I better be careful, if a dragonfly heard that I'll be in trouble." She said this probably more to keep up our belief as children so we would refrain from saying bad words, but she clearly didn't believe it. Today, now that we've grown older, it is more of a saying that comes up when we either swear or see a dragonfly, even though we no longer believe it.

Text: If you swear, or say a naughty word around a dragonfly, it will sew your mouth shut.

Texture: Darline shared the saying in a matter-of-fact tone. Not in a conspiratorial or reprimanding way, but in an obvious kind of way, as if to say that she was surprised someone didn't know it. If we were outside and she saw a dragonfly, she would often point to the bug and say the phrases in a warning voice. Other times it was more of a joke or silly thing to say when with a group of friends. When she would say it in this kind of setting it was accompanied with a laugh or giggle because she knew that she nor anyone around her believed her.

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