

A story told to me by an old Bushman who appears to be
between 70 or 80 years of age.

On asking Old Africaander: Do you believe in Watermeide?
he lit his pipe, took off his hat, sat down on the ground and
then commenced:

Baas, I have never seen the thing they call a Watermeid,
but that there is such a thing I believe as firmly as I sit here.
For the missionaries said that my sister was too clever a girl,
and she was very pious besides, and she told me with her own
mouth that she believed in them.

I know many stories of Waterwomen which my mother
has told me, & I will tell Baas one of these:

There was once a young girl who all the people said
was so good looking. One day this girl went out to walk
along the River and came to a large waterhole over which
a Krauta was hanging. (Here Old Africaander stopped short,
and advised me never to go near a waterhole over which
a Krauta is hanging, for, says he: "Met zoo een gat
^{Baas}
is dit nooit helder nie") and then continued his story.

Well Baas, I told you she stopped at this hole to look at
some flowers which were very attractive and which were

drifting near her, till at last one of them came so near that she stooped over the water's side to pluck it. But she had hardly touched the flower when she was caught by the hand and dragged into the water.

Now as the girl did not come home her mother went to look for her and traced her spoor to the hole wherein she had been dragged, and when she saw that her spoor did not go any further she knew at once that the Waterwomen had caught her child, for she was a clever woman.

She therefore ran in the Velvet or there gathered some shrubs which she knew the Waterwomen were very fond of.

When she had enough of these shrubs she ran home, dried them hastily by the fire and ground them into fine powder.

Then she ran back to the hole or threw the dust over the water. When she had done this she went and stood a little way off and waited. She had not waited long when she saw her child coming out of the water and walking towards her. She was unhurt, but the Waterwomen had loved her so much that they had licked her cheeks quite white, and this remained so ever afterwards.

She told her mother that the people who live under

the water had such fine houses, and that they live in great abundance.

As I have said, the girl's mother was a very clever woman, and it was well that she had instructed her child from her youth how to behave, and what to eat if ever she should fall into the hands of the Waterwomen. If they ask you "what will you eat, fish or meat?" you must say: "I eat neither of these; give me bread to eat." If you ask for fish or meat it will be certain death to you, as the Waterwomen are half fish half flesh ^{want to} they would think that you would eat them.

And now Paas, (says Africaander) I will prove to you that there is such a thing as Waterwomen, and then you will believe the story I have just told you:

I knew once an Hottentot, his name was Lamboer, he was a first rate fiddler, and altogether a jolly fellow, but he had unfortunately a most severe wife. This Hottentot lived on the bank of a river, and on the other side of this same river there also lived some other Hottentots. These Hottentots one night gave a dancing party & invited Lamboer to come and play the fiddle

for them. So Samboer went to his wife and said to her: "You must give me my new clothes, for I want to go to the party to night." But his wife being jealous said: "I see you to the D. & first"; so Samboer went with his old clothes.

When it was about midnight he said he would go home; all the people objected to this, but he, being afraid of his wife, would not listen to them. So he went, but never reached his home. Next morning he was found on the bank of the river with his nose and ears eaten off. The Waterwomen had done this for him. They had caught him by letting the water rise higher and higher on the spot where Samboer was crossing.

So says Africaander. Does there is proof enough that there are Waterwomen.