

CHAPTER 8 —The Hero Kutoyis (Blood Clot)

Down where those two creeks meet, a man once lived with his wife and two daughters in comfort, enjoying the fruits of the land and the hunt. But the man was getting to be old, so he was delighted when one day a young man came to his camp, a brave man and a great hunter. He gave the young man his two daughters as wives and all of his wealth – except for a small lodge in which he and his wife lived.

The grateful son-in-law would hunt and share the meat with the old couple and give them skin to make robes from and to sleep on. The young man was so skilled as a hunter that before long he had managed to collect a whole herd of buffalo, which he kept under a big logjam where the two creeks met. Whenever the hunter needed some buffalo meat or a hide, he would get the old man to come to the logjam. The old man would jump on the logjam until the frightened buffalo ran out, and the hunter would shoot one or two – never killing wastefully.

As the months went by, the hunter stopped giving the old man any of the meat. He and his wife were hungry all the time, growing thin and weak. The hunter still made the old man help in the hunt by stomping on the logjam, but sent him home empty-handed. Lest the old man's daughters take pity on their parents, he instructed them never to give the old people anything.

This was fine with the older daughter who had grown just as mean as her husband, but not so for the younger one. She stole some meat, and when no one was looking, threw it into her parents' lodge. In this way, the old couple was sustained for a little while longer.

One day the young hunter summoned the old man for his chore at the logjam. He stomped, and the buffalo ran out. The hunter shot one of them. Wounded, the buffalo ran off and finally fell over dead. The old man followed it and came to a place where the buffalo had lost a large clot of blood.

Pretending to stumble and fall, the old man let his arrows fall from his quiver. As he picked them up, he also stuffed the blood clot into the quiver.

His son-in-law came running up. "What is that you're picking up?" he demanded.

"Nothing. I fell down and spilled my bow and arrows."

"Curse you, you lazy, good-for-nothing old man," the son-in-law said, snatching the old man's bow and arrows from his quiver. "Go home."

The old man hurried back to his lodge and told his wife to put the kettle on. The old woman was pleased to think that their son-in-law had turned generous, but the old man told her it was not that



way. When the water reached a boil, the old man tipped his quiver over the kettle. Immediately came the sound of a child crying in pain.

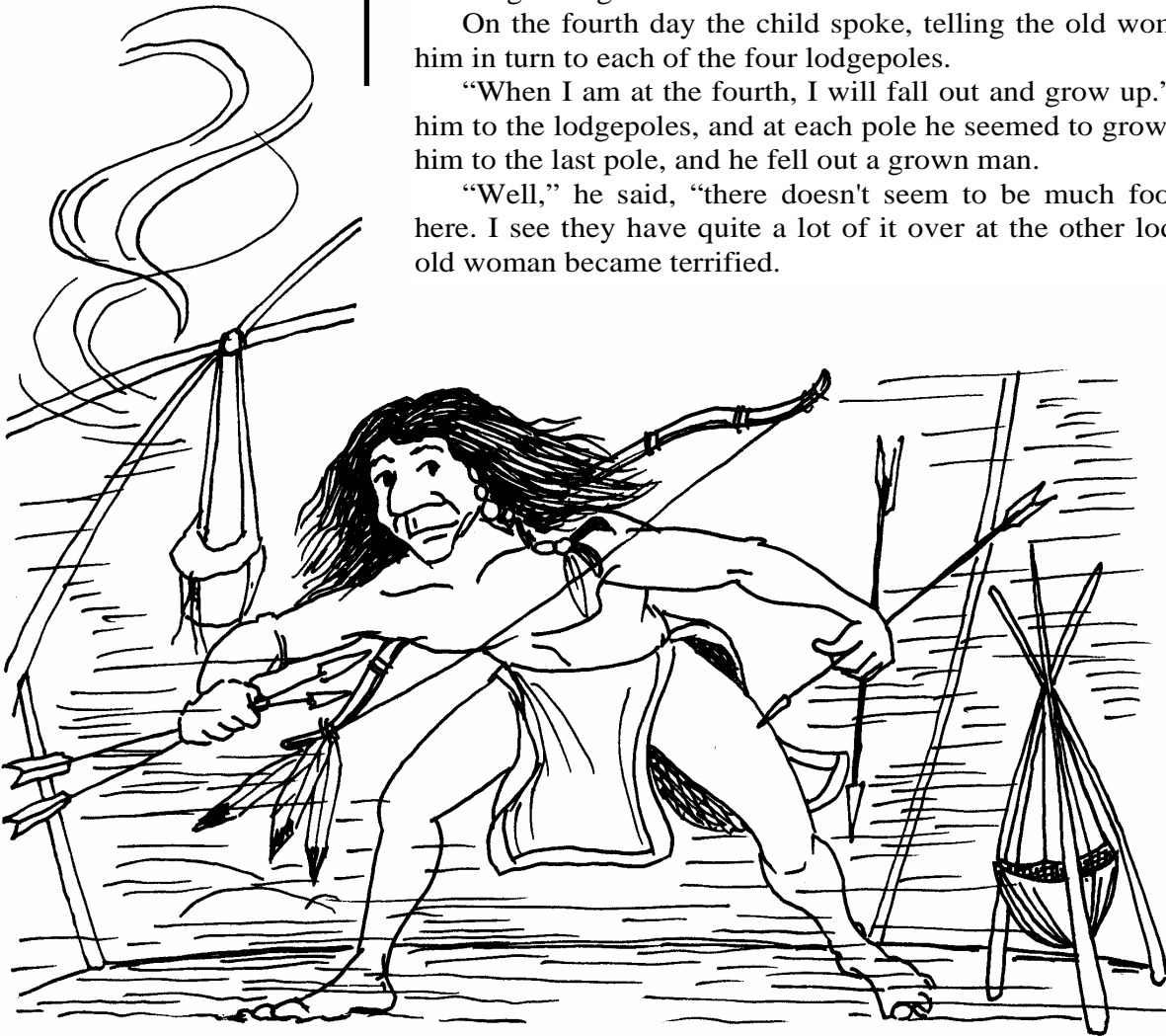
The old couple looked in the kettle and were amazed to see a little boy in the water. They pulled him out and quickly made a cradleboard for him, tying him in. Then they talked.

If their son-in-law found out the child was a boy, he would surely kill it. But if he thought it was a girl, he would think that one day he would have another wife. They decided to tell their daughters and evil son-in-law that it was a girl. They named him Kutoyis, which means clot of blood. When the hunter and his two wives came home that day, they heard an infant crying. The hunter sent his younger wife over to see what had happened. She returned, saying that her parents had given birth to a girl child. He didn't believe her, so he sent his older wife. She came back saying the same thing, so he believed her. Thinking he would someday add another wife to his lodge, he told his wives to take some pemmican over to the old people from now on so there would be plenty of milk for the growing child.

On the fourth day the child spoke, telling the old woman to tie him in turn to each of the four lodgepoles.

"When I am at the fourth, I will fall out and grow up." She tied him to the lodgepoles, and at each pole he seemed to grow. She tied him to the last pole, and he fell out a grown man.

"Well," he said, "there doesn't seem to be much food around here. I see they have quite a lot of it over at the other lodge." The old woman became terrified.



“Be quiet, he’ll hear you and kill us,” she cried. “They don’t give us food.” The old man explained to Kutoyis how they had been mistreated by their son-in-law and how he had taken their arrows and starved them. He told Kutoyis that he had, however, four stone arrowheads. So the old man and Kutoyis made a new bow and four new arrows, to which they attached the arrowheads.

“Come now, Father.” said Kutoyis early the next morning. “We will go and kill a buffalo for food.” The two men made their way to the son-in-law’s logjam, and the old man pounded on it. A fat buffalo came out, and Kutoyis killed it.

Now the son-in-law appeared and, on finding the old man already skinning a buffalo, cried out, “Take a good breath, old man, for it’ll be your last.” But Kutoyis, who was hiding behind the carcass, told the old man what to say.

“Maybe the last breath will be yours,” the old man shouted at his son-in-law. At this, the enraged son-in-law shot at the old man. But he missed, and the old man shot back and missed, too. After three more misses on each side, Kutoyis stood up and challenged the son-in-law. Kutoyis promptly shot and killed him with four arrows. Then he went to the man’s lodge and killed his two wives, giving the lodge and all its food supplies to the old couple.

“Now I must make my journey,” said Kutoyis. “Tell me where there are people.” The old man directed him to Badger Creek where there were many lodges.

In the center of the settlement was a fine lodge with the figure of a bear painted on it. But Kutoyis chose to go to another lodge where there were two old women. They gave Kutoyis some dried meat to eat and told him about the Great Bear chief who mistreated the people of his village, always keeping the best food for himself.

Kutoyis went to the place where the chief’s buffalo were kept, killed a fat calf, and told the women to hang the best pieces to dry outside their lodge. When the bear people and their chief came to claim the good meat, Kutoyis killed them all. All, that is, but a young female, whom he left alone, to breed new bears in the forest. Having rid these people of a monster, Kutoyis went on to find more people.

He found a camp on Sun River and went into the lodge of an old woman. Once again he was given bad food and was told of the tyranny of the village chief, the Great Snake, and his snake followers. Kutoyis cut these oppressors to pieces, sparing only a young female to go and breed new snakes in the forest.

The villagers told Kutoyis about the monster Ai-sin-o-ko-ki (Wind Sucker), who lived in the mountains and terrorized the people. Kutoyis found the horrible monster and saw in his wide-open mouth a scene that disgusted him. Many people were inside! Some only bones, some more recently dead, some barely alive, and some recently swallowed. Kutoyis leapt into the mouth to help the people.

“What is that thing hanging from the roof of his mouth?” he asked them.

“It is the monster's heart,” they answered.

“Then we shall have a ghost dance,” the hero announced, “and I shall wear a knife on my head.”

The people danced around Kutoyis, who himself danced wildly so that at each leap the knife on his head pierced Wind Sucker's heart until he died. Kutoyis freed the people who were still alive.

“I must see all the people,” said Kutoyis. “Where are there more?”

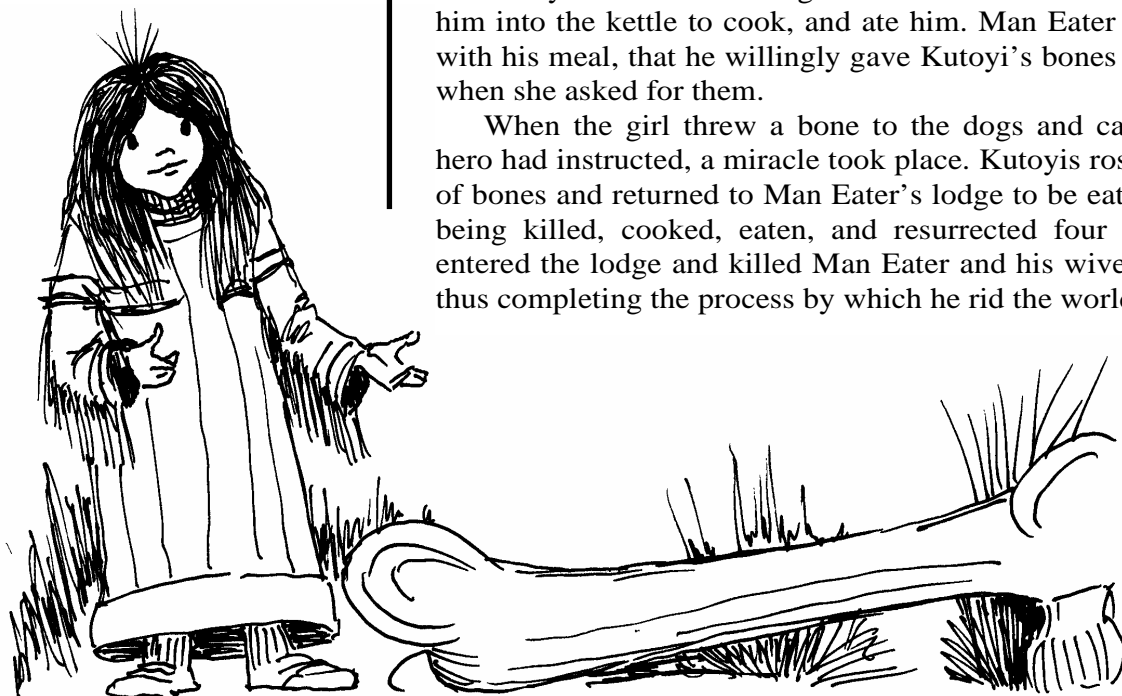
Directed toward a camp up a nearby river, the hero was warned to avoid a woman along the way who challenged all passer-by's to a wrestling match that always ended in the passer-by's death. Kutoyis knew now that his role in life was to rid the people of evil and to restore harmony in the world. He went directly to the bad woman's lodge.

When he arrived, the woman challenged him; Kutoyis refused three times before accepting the fourth call. He noticed that the woman had hidden sharp objects in the grass and realized that she won her matches by throwing her adversaries onto them. Kutoyis turned the tables by throwing the woman into the grass, and she was cut into shreds.

So the great Kutoyis went on. He killed a wicked witch and a woman who tricked people into tripping over a rope and falling to their deaths into a lake inhabited by a man-eating fish. Kutoyis eventually came to the camp of the worst monster of all, the Man Eater. Then Kutoyis did something strange. He told a little girl in the camp that he planned to enter Man Eater's lodge to be eaten. He instructed her to retrieve one of his bones after the meal was done, throw it to the dogs, and cry out, “Kutoyis, the dogs have your bones.”

Kutoyis entered the lodge where Man Eater cut his throat, put him into the kettle to cook, and ate him. Man Eater was so content with his meal, that he willingly gave Kutoyis's bones to the little girl when she asked for them.

When the girl threw a bone to the dogs and called out as the hero had instructed, a miracle took place. Kutoyis rose from the pile of bones and returned to Man Eater's lodge to be eaten again. After being killed, cooked, eaten, and resurrected four times, Kutoyis entered the lodge and killed Man Eater and his wives and children, thus completing the process by which he rid the world of evil.



How Well Did You Read and Understand the Story?

Hint: Sometimes you will read stories that are difficult to relate to. It is important to first learn the customs and beliefs of the people about whom the story is written. This may help you uncover the significance of the story.

1. How many different groups of people does Kutoyis help?
2. What does the youngest daughter do to help her parents?
3. Why does the son-in-law try to kill his wives' father?
4. What does Kutoyis ultimately want to do?
5. How does Kutoyis kill the Man Eater?
6. Compare Kutoyis to any character you have read about or seen in a movie. List similarities and differences.
7. How does the author reveal the main character to you? Make a list of characteristics that describe Kutoyis.
8. Consider the mood of the story. How does the mood contribute to the story's effect?
9. Write a brief synopsis explaining how Kutoyis came to be.
10. Insert yourself into the story in Kutoyis's place. How would the story change if you were the hero? Explain.