

THE CANNIBAL LYNX

A lynx had a great fondness for human women. He'd marry them and, if there was no other food, eat them for his supper. He ate one wife after he was married to her for just two days. Another wife he ate even as they were making love.

After a while, women seemed to catch on to the lynx. Maybe it was the way he tested their thighs for meat before he asked them to marry him. Or maybe it was the drool on his lips when they agreed to do so. Whatever the reason, he began to have some difficulty in finding a wife.

At last the lynx found a woman willing to marry him. She had a face like a porcupine's and so many lice on her head that they kept dropping into the stewpot. Yet she left him when he tried to put her at the end of his roasting stick.

Now the lynx was all alone. All alone and very, very hungry. He searched around for game, but he couldn't find any. No woman, either. So he said to himself, *Maybe I'm good to eat...*

He gnawed off one of his legs and put it on his roasting stick. Once he'd cooked the leg, he took a few cautious bites. Rolled the meat around in his mouth. Swallowed it. "Well," he exclaimed, "I don't taste bad at all." He ate the rest of the leg, including the bone.

Next day the lynx cut off the other leg and ate that, too. The day after that, he ate his arm. Then his other arm. Next went his loins, his shoulders, and his intestines.

Finally only one thing was left -- his heart.
And he was still hungry.
So he tore out his heart, cooked and ate it.
That was the end of the cannibal lynx.





A HEAD OF LICE

A boy had so many lice that his scratching kept his parents awake at night. At last they decided to leave him behind ... else they would never get any sleep. So one morning they packed up their gear. That's nice, thought the boy, we're going on a trip. He asked his mother to help him put on his snowshoes.

"Only when we're finished packing our skins," she told him. But after they finished, she hauled the *tabaskan* onto the soft snow and off she went with her husband.

"Wait for me! Wait for me!" the boy cried.

"You have too many lice for us," his parents called back.

The boy ran after them, but he was barefoot, and his feet began to freeze. Now I'll die, he thought: At least I hope I'll die.

Just then a very tall man emerged from the woods. When the boy saw this man, he shouted: "Mother! There's a giant come to eat me."

"You don't want your mother, boy," the giant said. "It's because of her that you're unhappy?"

"Who are you?"

"Your old grandfather. Death has changed my shape somewhat. I'm a lot taller than when I was alive. Also, stronger?"

Now the giant bent down and began picking the lice from the

boy's head. He picked off all but two, saying that if he picked off these two, a male and a female, there wouldn't be any lice in the world. And lice, he declared, have their place, too.

Then the giant lifted up the boy and carried him to his parents' camp. "Who brought you here?" his mother demanded.

The boy pointed to the giant. His mother screamed: "It's a monster!"

"You're the monster, woman," the giant said, "for you left your son behind to die. From now on, I'll be living with you to make sure it doesn't happen again."

So it was that the giant lived right there in the tent with the family. Each night he'd blow on the boy to make him grow. At last the boy had grown so big that he could go out hunting alone.

One day the boy came back to the tent only to discover that the giant had left. He followed the giant's tracks, yelling: "Grandfather! Grandfather!" When the giant heard these words, he stopped. The boy caught up with him.

"You said you'd stay with me," the boy said.

"That's true," the giant replied, "but you don't need me anymore. See how big you've grown? You're almost a man now."

After that, there were no more complaints about lice. Indeed, the boy's mother often pleaded with him to let her pick off his two remaining lice. But he refused to allow this. For lice, he said, have their place, too.



NIASSA

Two girls were paddling a canoe across a lake. One of them took off her neck amulet and flung it in the water. “Why did you do that?” asked the other girl, whose name was Niassa.

“To appease Amiskuapeu ...”

“Master Beaver? You don’t believe that silly stuff, do you?”

“I believe in all the masters. Master Marten, Master Bear, Master Wolf, Master Owl...”

“How about a Master Leech?” Niassa laughed.

Suddenly a huge leech stuck its head from the water. It grabbed Niassa and carried her to the bottom of the lake, where it proceeded to mate with her.

And that’s how Niassa became Mrs. Leech.

Moral: Respect the masters, friend, or you’ll be sorry.

THE WOLF

Once upon a time a boy fell sick. When he tried to move, he felt pain. In his stomach was a howling which frightened people.

So an old *mistapeo* came to the boy's tent. Our son is dying, the mother told the man. The *mistapeo* listened to the boy's body, then he looked up and said: "This boy has swallowed a wolf."

"Swallowed a wolf?" exclaimed the father.

"Yes, and it's the wolf that's sick. The boy is fine."

"We must get the wolf out of him."

"No," said the *mistapeo*, "you must not. The boy will die then. Instead the wolf must be cured."

Now the old man bent down and listened again. He said: "The wolf seems to need another wolf, a female."

"Isn't one wolf in my son enough?" inquired the father.

"He needs two wolves. Otherwise, the one will always be sick."

The *mistapeo* left the tent. He was gone for quite a while. When he came back, he had a young girl with him. "She has three wolves in her," he explained. "That's one wolf too many."

Now the girl put her lips to the boy's lips. All of a sudden there was a noise like a big animal moving from one den to another.

"Her wolf has gone to the boy," the *mistapeo* said, "which means his wolf will be all right now."

So it happened that the boy got back his health.

THE BIRTH OF TCHAKAPESH

Once upon a time a man and his wife were chopping down trees for firewood. They were making so much noise at this that they woke up Mammoth.

“What creature is disturbing my sleep?” roared Mammoth. He found the man and crushed him into the ground like a dry piece of wood. Then he ate him. The woman was pregnant and Mammoth ripped open her womb and with his tusk flung away a little boy-child. He ate the woman, too.

The couple had a daughter whom they’d left behind to tend camp. This daughter wondered why her parents were so late in getting back, so she put on her snowshoes and went out to look for them. She found the little boy-child.

“Who are you?” she said.

“I’m your brother Tchakapesh.”

“I didn’t know I had a brother.”

“Well, I arrived a little early...”

Now the girl picked up the boy and put him in a kettle to keep him warm. She fed him rich suet for three days and in those three days he grew to manhood. He stepped from the kettle and told his sister:

“I’m going to kill Mammoth because he killed our father and mother.”

Tchakapesh made a bow from the rib of a caribou. But when he bent it back, it broke. Then he made a bow from the thigh-bone of a

bear, but it broke, too. At last he cut down a big birch tree and bent it back and forth until he was certain it was strong enough. A whole grove of spruce trees became his arrows.

His sister said, "You can't fight Mammoth naked, brother."

"Mammoth is naked, so I'll be naked, too."

Tchakapesh walked to where Mammoth had killed his parents. He stood inside one of Mammoth's footprints and called for his brother Wolf. He said to Wolf, "Go find Mammoth for me."

"And what shall I say you want with him?"

"Just say I want to kill him."

Wolf's message made Mammoth very angry for he could not imagine being killed by a puny human being. So he rumbled through the woods until he found Tchakapesh standing in the footprint.

"I thought you'd be bigger," Tchakapesh told him, "but you're little more than a slightly overgrown muskrat."

Mammoth rushed toward him, shaking the ground so violently that Tchakapesh dropped his bow. Then Mammoth picked him up and flung him against a tree. Picked him up a second time and flung him against another tree. Picked him up a third time and flung him right next to where Tchakapesh had dropped his bow.

"Before you die," Mammoth said, "I wish you'd tell me this: how can you breathe through that tiny thing between your legs?"

Tchakapesh sent an arrow into Mammoth's trunk.

"How can you breathe through your thing with that arrow there?" he said.

This made Mammoth even more angry. He made a lunge toward Tchakapesh with his tusks, but Tchakapesh was quicker, and he sent an arrow directly into Mammoth's heart.

Mammoth toppled to the ground. He said: "You have killed me, Tchakapesh. What are you going to do with my body?"

"I'll make your ears into a mattress. Your tail will guy down my tent. As for your ribs, they'll paddle my canoe."

"That's fine. Just don't let grease from my head fall on a woman's

hands. Else there'll be trouble..."

Now Tchakapesh took his knife and started to cut up Mammoth. But no sooner would he cut off a piece of meat than it'd sprout wings and fly away.

In Mammoth's stomach, he found chunks of human beings. He happened to breathe on these chunks, and they joined together. And started wobbling around.

Said Tchakapesh: "It seems I have the gift of *mentociwim*. I can bring the dead back to life. But if I go around doing that, there'd be too many people and not enough game."

Whereupon he took a couple of his arrows and shot these people. They stopped wobbling.

After he cut off Mammoth's head, Tchakapesh was so tired that he curled up in the snow and went to sleep. His sister came along and saw the head lying there. "Is it dead?" she wondered. To find out, she touched it. The instant she got grease on her hands, the head came alive and started hopping along the ground toward Tchakapesh.

Just before the head reached him, Tchakapesh woke up and shot it with another arrow.

"We're safe from Mammoth now," he told his sister, "assuming you can keep your hands off his head."

"Don't worry," she said. But as she bent down to help him take out the arrow, she happened to touch the head again. And once again it came alive. Once again Tchakapesh had to kill it, this time with an arrow right between the eyes.

Now he buried the head deep in the ground and put a big rock on top of it. He chanted words telling it to stay down there forever. He made certain prayers.

"That, I hope, will be the last of Mammoth," said Tchakapesh.

And it was the last of Mammoth too. Or so the old people used to say.