

Spilyay and The Monster

In this tale Spilyáy kills the monsters that were swallowing all the people, gives many animals the colors they now wear, and exiles the monsters so that people could live in peace. It shows how cowardice can defeat human beings. Special attention should be paid to the middle of the tale, where examples of this are pointed out.

In the land of Winátsha (Water Pouring Out), and the canyon going up towards Omak, where there is a high rocky mountain there lived a man-eating monster in the water. He was the leader of other monsters living in this area. All kinds of creatures used to travel through there, and this monster would surprise them and capture them. The monster resembled a dog and when he inhaled anything he would howl, "Whuu" five times; then he would swallow them.

One day Spilyáy was sauntering along the trail on top of the mountain. He was famished because he hadn't had anything to eat for many days. He strained himself five times, letting out five piles and these mounds turned into his sisters. He asked them where he could find some food. His sisters knew everything and when he was in trouble he usually accepted their wise counseling. This time they were reluctant to give him any information. "Oh, we don't want to tell you because when we tell you what to do, you always say, 'Just as I thought.' That's why we don't want to tell you." He was real angry with them and he said, "Oh tamkw'ikw'i (hail) come down and smash these selfish things to pieces. They don't want to help me! And I waste my energy carrying them around!" Finally, they consented to tell him. They told him, "You are near the home of a man and wife. They are informers for a water monster living at the bottom of the river. He has some resemblance to a huge dog. When you get there they will tell the monster and he will come and get you. He will inhale you inside his mouth." Spilyáy decided to go ahead, anyway, and find out.

He prepared himself carefully. He put on his best clothes, and proceeded on up the trail towards this place his sisters told him about. He began to sing, "Ah, haha, ya haaaaa, ha hu ha huu, ah hu ha ihuh huu," sauntering along as if he did not know there was a monster living there.

Yityíitya (Sandpiper) and his wife heard this song, and they were alarmed. They thought it was some sort of ferocious being. Pretty soon the song seemed to hypnotize them and they began to sway with the rhythm of it, and the music seemed to echo and reverberate up and down the canyon. It hypnotized the Yityíitya and put them in a deep trance. Coyote walked up to them and grabbed one of them by the head and throat and he cut off its tongue. But before he could cut the second one's tongue, it managed to let out a yelp, "yit!" He told them if they didn't tell the monster about him he would reward them with a beautiful robe and decorations.

The monster heard the very weak "Yiit!" and he decided to investigate. Usually they made loud sounds, but this was very faint and weak, and usually they swam out in the river to warn him, too, and they were not out there.

The monster came up to the surface of the river and peered around. Again he heard a faint, "Yiit!", as Yityítaya was vainly struggling to warn the monster. Then the monster climbed out of the water to find out what was happening. He climbed up the steep cliff to the top of the hill.

Spilyáy was waiting at the top of the hill for this monster, who truly resembled a huge dog. Spilyáy had rigged up a trap for this monster. When it climbed up and reached the top of the mountain Spilyáy cut the vines. The monster fell down the cliff to his death, splattering blood all over the cliffside. Today when you are driving along Highway 97 between Entiat and Chelan, you will see the cliffs all covered with red streaks and splashes of blood on the stone cliffs. This place is Ribbon Cliff.

While the monster was catapulting down the canyon, Spilyáy was nonchalantly singing his song, "Ah ha, yahaaaah ha haaa, ihaaaa, ah ha ha hu ha hu ihuh huu, ah huu!"

Then Spilyáy climbed down the cliffside, and he discovered all the creatures that the monster was holding captive in his stomach. He turned everything loose. He found Wáxpúsh (rattlesnake) inside. When he became angry—"Shay!"—Spilyáy told him, "Ah, indeed you must be ferocious. Then why have you turned into waste inside this monster?" He turned everything loose. That's why we have all these birds and animals back again because Spilyáy turned them loose after the monster had swallowed them.

He told Yityítaya and his wife, "Although you are spies, I will reward you nevertheless." He painted their hands (bird legs), painted even their fingernails red, then he made paint from the blood of the monster, and painted their feathers. On their faces he painted their eyelashes black from parts of the monster's body (like the girls do these days when they paint their eyelashes) and he drew heavy lines around their eyes. He fixed them all up, and they were so proud. They ran down to the river's edge and looked at their reflection in the water. They were proud of their decorations. The female had some yellow paint mixed in with the paint on her feet. Then he massaged their tongues with his hands, making them long again.

When you look at Yityítaya running along the river banks today, you will notice how they are decorated. Coyote predicted, "You will always be together living near the water."

Then he walked on down the trail again, along the river. When the other monsters heard what he did to this dog monster, they held a council and warned each other to avoid this Spilyáy because he wanted to kill them. He kept on walking and singing his song sitting on top of the hilltops, hoping somebody

would answer him. But all the monsters had warned each other not to fool with this creature, so there was no answer to Spilyáy's song. (This is the way he sings today, sitting on top of the hill. He will also let his sisters sing too. That is why you think you hear a whole pack of coyotes singing at night, when actually there is only one).

Little Sagebrush Mísís (grey ground squirrel) would run down there and cautiously peek at him, "Yes, that's Spilyáy," then he would run quickly back and tell the monsters from Banks Lake, "Yes, it's Spilyáy!" They all hid themselves, and poor Spilyáy would not get any response from the monsters.

That's the way it should be; when you know there is something around that might harm you, stay very still and hide. Don't try to be brave and confront something that might harm you. If you know there is a person who could do you harm, avoid him, and don't try to have anything to do with him.

As Spilyáy was walking along the river, he came up on a monster that was not warned. He approached him at Sundale, north of the Columbia River. The monster was huge and powerful like those we call prehistoric monsters. This monster used all his strength and tried to swallow Spilyáy. But Spilyáy fought against the monster as it tried to inhale him.

He prepared to outwit this monster. He went out and gathered vines that grew along the Columbia River. (These vines are there today, and are used for many things.) He braided them into ropes. Then he prepared some pitch wood and made shavings out of this and hid it. He tied himself to a big rock with the vines and called out to the monster, "Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! Oh, hohohohoy! How come you are asleep?" But the monster ignored him. "Oh, I'm so afraid of you. Are you so afraid of me that you don't answer me?" Finally the monster became angry, and he came up out of the water and he inhaled with all his strength. Coyote slyly told the monster, "Oh, nephew, what is the matter with you, don't you recognize me? This is I, the old man!" The monster sucked and sucked, tore one vine off the rock, then another, and Spilyáy said, "My,my! He just does not recognize me!"

He tried to convince the monster of his identity. Finally the monster broke all five ropes and swallowed him. Then Spilyáy walked inside, and the first one to greet him with a "Sháay" (rattling sound) was another rattlesnake. Spilyáy said to him, "Sháay! indeed. Look at you making all this racket, and you are nothing but waste." He told the rest of the captives, "Why are you growling at me? How come you didn't use all that meanness on the monster when he swallowed you?"

Some of the animals inside were very cold; they were huddled together shivering. Spilyáy decided to build a fire. He had some flint and he built a fire with the pitch shavings he had hidden inside his robe. He made sure to build this fire right beneath the heart. The small creatures recognized him and

they called him "uncle." They were scurrying around helping him gather bits of wood. Some even tore their clothes to help build this fire. They told him, "We are hungry and cold." He told them, "What's the matter with you? Don't you see all this fat dripping around from the inside of the monster?" Then he said he would cook for them. Pretty soon the fat began to drip from the heart of the monster, as the heart began to bake.

Coyote sat nearby licking the drippings. "This is what I thought. I knew that this monster was nice and fat and would fill my stomach." He cut up the vines still hanging on his body and added them to the fire. Then he invited the creatures to come and help themselves to the bits and pieces of fat that began to fall off the monster's heart. "Don't be so stupid. Don't you see all this food around?" Then he invited them to sit down and eat.

All the creatures began to feast and they began to feel alive again, because they were nearly starving to death. There was Whippoorwill tearing at the heart and Blue Jay drinking fat.

Suddenly they heard a funny sound like groaning. "Hah, Hah, Hah." Spilyáy said, "Hurry, gather some more firewood; let's build up our fire." And they all ran around picking up debris and breaking off pieces of their clothing to make more fuel for the fire. The flames shot up against the heart. Then they began to heave around inside and they felt they were tipping over, and they heard a sound, "Haah!" which sounded final. Spilyáy told them, "Quickly head for an opening" (anus) and they all swam right into the water. Some swam to shore, and some flew away. Some of the creatures were affected by the smoke inside the monster. Old Heron's wings were scorched at the tips; that's why you see the heron with black wing tips. Other birds were streaked with black and gray. Some became all black, like Blackbird. Even Spilyáy was scorched here and there on his body. Some parts were yellowed with smoke and there were dark patches on his body like burns. That's why he looks scorched. Some of the creatures nearly died. He would shove them out saying, "Oh, you're just faking around; you don't want to die. Look at me; I am an old man and I'm not dying."

Since that time, when Spilyáy killed his second monster, he made a decree. "There will no longer be monsters to kill people." He told the monsters, "You will not kill people anymore. Others should have a chance to live too." The monsters that didn't want to observe his decree immediately left the area, moving to deeper waters, so they would not have to encounter Spilyáy anymore. Some, like the shark or killer whale, still kill people. But in this area there are no killer monsters in any of our rivers or lakes.