

# *Kūt-o'-yis*

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Native American North American

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*Easy*

*21 min read*

Long ago, down where Two Medicine and Badger Creeks come together, there lived an old man. He had but one wife and two daughters. One day there came to his camp a young man who was very brave and a great hunter. The old man said: "Ah! I will have this young man to help me. I will give him my daughters for wives." So he gave him his daughters. He also gave this son-in-law all his wealth, keeping for himself only a little lodge, in which he lived with his old wife. The son-in-law lived in a lodge that was big and fine.

At first the son-in-law was very good to the old people. Whenever he killed anything, he gave them part of the meat, and furnished plenty of robes and skins for their bedding and clothing. But after a while he began to be very mean to them.

Now the son-in-law kept the buffalo hidden under a big log jam in the river. Whenever he wanted to kill anything, he would have the old man go to help him; and the old man would stamp on the log jam and frighten the buffalo, and when they ran out, the young man would shoot one or two, never killing wastefully. But often he gave the old people nothing to eat, and they were hungry all the time, and began to grow thin and weak.

One morning, the young man called his father-in-law to go down to the log jam and hunt with him. They started, and the young man killed a fat buffalo cow. Then he said to the old man, "Hurry back now, and tell your children to get the dogs and carry this meat home, then you can have something to eat." And the old man did as he had been ordered, thinking to himself: "Now, at last, my son-in-law has taken pity on me. He will give

me part of this meat.” When he returned with the dogs, they skinned the cow, cut up the meat and packed it on the dog travois, and went home. Then the young man had his wives unload it, and told his father-in-law to go home. He did not give him even a piece of liver. Neither would the older daughter give her parents anything to eat, but the younger took pity on the old people and stole a piece of meat, and when she got a chance threw it into the lodge to the old people. The son-in-law told his wives not to give the old people anything to eat. The only way they got food was when the younger woman would throw them a piece of meat unseen by her husband and sister.

Another morning, the son-in-law got up early, and went and kicked on the old man’s lodge to wake him, and called him to get up and help him, to go and pound on the log jam to drive out the buffalo, so that he could kill some. When the old man pounded on the jam, a buffalo ran out, and the son-in-law shot it, but only wounded it. It ran away, but at last fell down and died. The old man followed it, and came to where it had lost a big clot of blood from its wound. When he came to where this clot of blood was lying on the ground, he stumbled and fell, and spilled his arrows out of his quiver; and while he was picking them up, he picked up also the clot of blood, and hid it in his quiver. “What are you picking up?” called out the son-in-law. “Nothing,” said the old man; “I just fell down and spilled my arrows, and am putting them back.” “Curse you, old man,” said the son-in-law, “you are lazy and useless. Go back and tell your children to come with the dogs and get this dead buffalo.” He also took away his bow and arrows from the old man.

The old man went home and told his daughters, and then went over to his own lodge, and said to his wife: “Hurry now, and put the kettle on the fire. I have brought home something from the butchering.” “Ah!” said the old woman, “has our son-in-law been generous, and given us something nice?” “No,” answered the old man; “hurry up and put the kettle on.” When the water began to boil, the old man tipped his quiver up over the kettle, and immediately there came from the pot a noise as of a child crying, as if it were being hurt, burnt or scalded. They looked in the kettle, and saw there a little boy, and they quickly took it out of the water. They were very much surprised. The old woman made a lashing to put the child in, and then they talked about it. They decided that if the son-in-law knew that it was a boy, he would kill it, so they resolved to tell their daughters that the baby was a girl. Then he would be glad, for he would think that after a while he would have it for a wife. They named the child Kūt-o’-yis (Clot of Blood).

The son-in-law and his wives came home, and after a while he heard the child crying. He told his youngest wife to go and find out whether that baby was a boy or a girl; if it was a boy, to tell them to kill it. She came back and

told them that it was a girl. He did not believe this, and sent his oldest wife to find out the truth of the matter. When she came back and told him the same thing, he believed that it was really a girl. Then he was glad, for he thought that when the child had grown up he would have another wife. He said to his youngest wife, "Take some pemmican over to your mother; not much, just enough so that there will be plenty of milk for the child."

Now on the fourth day the child spoke, and said, "Lash me in turn to each one of these lodge poles, and when I get to the last one, I will fall out of my lashing and be grown up." The old woman did so, and as she lashed him to each lodge pole he could be seen to grow, and finally when they lashed him to the last pole, he was a man. After Küt-o'-yis had looked about the inside of the lodge, he looked out through a hole in the lodge covering, and then, turning round, he said to the old people: "How is it there is nothing to eat in this lodge? I see plenty of food over by the other lodge." "Hush up," said the old woman, "you will be heard. That is our son-in-law. He does not give us anything at all to eat." "Well," said Küt-o'-yis, "where is your pis'kun?" The old woman said, "It is down by the river. We pound on it and the buffalo come out."

Then the old man told him how his son-in-law abused him. "He has taken my weapons from me, and even my dogs; and for many days we have had nothing to eat, except now and then a small piece of meat our daughter steals for us."

"Father," said Küt-o'-yis, "have you no arrows?" "No, my son," he replied; "but I have yet four stone points."

"Go out then and get some wood," said Küt-o'-yis. "We will make a bow and arrows. In the morning we will go down and kill something to eat."

Early in the morning Küt-o'-yis woke the old man, and said, "Come, we will go down now and kill when the buffalo come out." When they had reached the river, the old man said: "Here is the place to stand and shoot. I will go down and drive them out." As he pounded on the jam, a fat cow ran out, and Küt-o'-yis killed it.

Meantime the son-in-law had gone out, and as usual knocked on the old man's lodge, and called to him to get up and go down to help him kill. The old woman called to him that her husband had already gone down. This made the son-in-law very angry. He said: "I have a good mind to kill you right now, old woman. I guess I will by and by."

The son-in-law went on down to the jam, and as he drew near, he saw the old man bending over, skinning a buffalo. "Old man," said he, "stand up and look all around you. Look well, for it will be your last look." Now

when he had seen the son-in-law coming, Küt-o'-yis had lain down and hidden himself behind the buffalo's carcass. He told the old man to say to his son-in-law, "You had better take your last look, for I am going to kill you, right now." The old man said this. "Ah!" said the son-in-law, "you make me angrier still, by talking back to me." He put an arrow to his bow and shot at the old man, but did not hit him. Küt-o'-yis told the old man to pick up the arrow and shoot it back at him, and he did so. Now they shot at each other four times, and then the old man said to Küt-o'-yis: "I am afraid now. Get up and help me." So Küt-o'-yis got up on his feet and said: "Here, what are you doing? I think you have been badly treating this old man for a long time."

Then the son-in-law smiled pleasantly, for he was afraid of Küt-o'-yis. "Oh, no," he said, "no one thinks more of this old man than I do. I have always taken great pity on him."

Then Küt-o'-yis said: "You lie. I am going to kill you now." He shot him four times, and the man died. Then Küt-o'-yis told the old man to go and bring down the daughter who had acted badly toward him. He did so, and Küt-o'-yis killed her. Then he went up to the lodges and said to the younger woman, "Perhaps you loved your husband." "Yes," she said, "I love him." So he killed her, too. Then he said to the old people: "Go over there now, and live in that lodge. There is plenty there to eat, and when it is gone I will kill more. As for myself, I will make a journey around about. Where are there any people? In what direction?" "Well," said the old man, "up above here on Badger Creek and Two Medicine, where the pis'kun is, there are some people."

Küt-o'-yis went up to where the pis'kun was, and saw there many lodges of people. In the centre of the camp was a large lodge, with a figure of a bear painted on it. He did not go into this lodge, but went into a very small one near by, where two old women lived; and when he went in, he asked them for something to eat. They set before him some lean dried meat and some belly fat. "How is this?" he asked. "Here is a pis'kun with plenty of fat meat and back fat. Why do you not give me some of that?" "Hush," said the old women. "In that big lodge near by, lives a big bear and his wives and children. He takes all those nice things and leaves us nothing. He is the chief of this place."

Early in the morning, Küt-o'-yis told the old women to get their dog travois, and harness it, and go over to the pis'kun, and that he was going to kill for them some fat meat. He reached there just about the time the buffalo were being driven in, and shot a cow, which looked very scabby, but was really very fat. Then he helped the old women to butcher, and when they had taken the meat to camp, he said to them, "Now take all the choice fat pieces, and hang them up so that those who live in the bear lodge will notice them."

They did this, and pretty soon the old chief bear said to his children: "Go out now, and look around. The people have finished killing by this time. See where the nicest pieces are, and bring in some nice back fat." A young bear went out of the lodge, stood up and looked around, and when it saw this meat close by, at the old women's lodge, it went over and began to pull it down. "Hold on there," said Küt-o'-yis. "What are you doing here, taking the old women's meat?" and he hit him over the head with a stick that he had. The young bear ran home crying, and said to his father, "A young man has hit me on the head." Then all the bears, the father and mother, and uncles and aunts, and all the relations, were very angry, and all rushed out toward the old women's lodge.

Küt-o'-yis killed them all, except one little child bear, a female, which escaped. "Well," said Küt-o'-yis, "you can go and breed bears, so there will be more."

Then said Küt-o'-yis to the old women: "Now, grandmothers, where are there any more people? I want to travel around and see them." The old women said: "The nearest ones are at the point of rocks (on Sun River). There is a pis'kun there." So Küt-o'-yis travelled off toward this place, and when he reached the camp, he entered an old woman's lodge.

The old woman set before him a plate of bad food. "How is this?" he asked. "Have you nothing better than this to set before a stranger? You have a pis'kun down there, and must get plenty of fat meat. Give me some pemmican." "We cannot do that," the old woman replied, "because there is a big snake here, who is chief of the camp. He not only takes the best pieces, but often he eats a handsome young woman, when he sees one." When Küt-o'-yis heard this he was angry, and went over and entered the snake's lodge. The women were cooking up some sarvis berries. He picked up the dish, and ate the berries, and threw the dish out of the door. Then he went over to where the snake was lying asleep, pricked him with his knife, and said: "Here, get up. I have come to see you." This made the snake angry. He partly raised himself up and began to rattle, when Küt-o'-yis cut him into pieces with his knife. Then he turned around and killed all his wives and children, except one little female snake, which escaped by crawling into a crack in the rocks. "Oh, well," said Küt-o'-yis, "you can go and breed young snakes, so there will be more. The people will not be afraid of little snakes." Küt-o'-yis said to the old woman, "Now you go into this snake's lodge and take it for yourself, and everything that is in it."

Then he asked them where there were some more people. They told him that there were some people down the river, and some up in the mountains. But they said: "Do not go there, for it is bad, because Ai-sin'-o-ko-ki (Wind Sucker) lives there. He will kill you." It pleased Küt-o'-yis to know that there was such a person, and he

went to the mountains.

When he got to the place where Wind Sucker lived, he looked into his mouth, and could see many dead people there,—some skeletons and some just dead. He went in, and there he saw a fearful sight. The ground was white as snow with the bones of those who had died. There were bodies with flesh on them; some were just dead, and some still living. He spoke to a living person, and asked, “What is that hanging down above us?” The person answered that it was Wind Sucker’s heart. Then said Küt-o’-yis: “You who still draw a little breath, try to shake your heads (in time to the song), and those who are still able to move, get up and dance. Take courage now, we are going to have the ghost dance.” So Küt-o’-yis bound his knife, point upward, to the top of his head and began to dance, singing the ghost song, and all the others danced with him; and as he danced up and down, the point of the knife cut Wind Sucker’s heart and killed him. Küt-o’-yis took his knife and cut through Wind Sucker’s ribs, and freed those who were able to crawl out, and said to those who could still travel to go and tell their people that they should come here for the ones who were still alive but unable to walk.

Then he asked some of these people: “Where are there any other people? I want to visit all the people.” They said to him: “There is a camp to the westward up the river, but you must not take the left-hand trail going up, because on that trail lives a woman, a handsome woman, who invites men to wrestle with her and then kills them. You must avoid her.” This was what Küt-o’-yis was looking for. This was his business in the world, to kill off all the bad things. So he asked the people just where this woman lived, and asked where it was best to go to avoid her. He did this, because he did not wish the people to know that he wanted to meet her.

He started on his way, and at length saw this woman standing by the trail. She called out to him, “Come here, young man, come here; I want to wrestle with you.” “No,” replied the young man, “I am in a hurry. I cannot stop.” But the woman called again, “No, no, come now and wrestle once with me.” When she had called him four times, Küt-o’-yis went up to her. Now on the ground, where this woman wrestled with people, she had placed many broken and sharp flints, partly hiding them by the grass. They seized each other, and began to wrestle over these broken flints, but Küt-o’-yis looked at the ground and did not step on them. He watched his chance, and suddenly gave the woman a wrench, and threw her down on a large sharp flint, which cut her in two; and the parts of her body fell asunder.

Then Küt-o’-yis went on, and after a while came to where a woman kept a sliding place; and at the far end of it there was a rope, which would trip people up, and when they were tripped, they would fall over a high cliff into deep water, where a great fish would eat them. When this woman saw him coming, she cried out, “Come over

here, young man, and slide with me.” “No,” he replied, “I am in a hurry.” She kept calling him, and when she had called the fourth time, he went over to slide with her. “This sliding,” said the woman, “is a very pleasant pastime.” “Ah!” said Küt-o’-yis, “I will look at it.” He looked at the place, and, looking carefully, he saw the hidden rope. So he started to slide, and took out his knife, and when he reached the rope, which the woman had raised, he cut it, and when it parted, the woman fell over backward into the water, and was eaten up by the big fish.

Again he went on, and after a while he came to a big camp. This was the place of a man-eater. Küt-o’-yis called a little girl he saw near by, and said to her: “Child, I am going into that lodge to let that man-eater kill and eat me.

Watch close, therefore, and when you can get hold of one of my bones, take it out and call all the dogs, and when they have all come up to you, throw it down and cry out, ‘Küt-o’-yis, the dogs are eating your bones!’”

Then Küt-o’-yis entered the lodge, and when the man-eater saw him, he cried out, “O’ki, O’ki,” and seemed glad to see him, for he was a fat young man. The man-eater took a large knife, and went up to Küt-o’-yis, and cut his throat, and put him into a great stone kettle to cook. When the meat was cooked, he drew the kettle from the fire, and ate the body, limb by limb, until it was all eaten up.

Then the little girl, who was watching, came up to him, and said, “Pity me, man-eater, my mother is hungry and asks you for those bones.” So the old man bunched them up together and handed them to her. She took them out, and called all the dogs to her, and threw the bones down to the dogs, crying out, “Look out, Küt-o’-yis; the dogs are eating you!” and when she said that, Küt-o’-yis arose from the pile of bones.

Again he went into the lodge, and when the man-eater saw him, he cried out, “How, how, how! the fat young man has survived,” and seemed surprised. Again he took his knife and cut Küt-o’-yis’ throat, and threw him into the kettle. Again, when the meat was cooked, he ate it up, and again the little girl asked for the bones, which he gave her; and, taking them out, she threw them to the dogs, crying, “Küt-o’-yis, the dogs are eating you!” and Küt-o’-yis again arose from the bones.

When the man-eater had cooked him four times, he again went into the lodge, and, seizing the man-eater, he threw him into the boiling kettle, and his wives and children too, and boiled them to death.

The man-eater was the seventh and last of the bad animals and people who were destroyed by Küt-o’-yis.

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