



Skagédi And The Man-Eater

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Native American

Easy
16 min read

SKAGÉDI lived on a hill and a man-eater lived at the foot of the same hill. The man-eater had a little kettle and a piece of chestnut. One day he scraped some of the chestnut into the kettle and taking a stick whipped the kettle till it was of the size he wanted and was full of chestnut pudding. Then he called for someone to come and eat with him.

He began to sing and dance; when he reached the end of the house, he struck his mallet against a post, and sang, "If a man-eater comes, I will kill him."

SKAGÉDI heard the song and the call, and he thought "I am hungry, maybe I had better go down to that man's house and get something to eat. He will not kill me, for I am not a man-eater. If he calls again, I will go." He stood waiting uncertain what to do.

Soon the man-eater sang, "I wish SKAGÉDI would come and help me eat this pudding."

"Now is my time," thought SKAGÉDI, "I will go."

He sang “HE-G×H-YA” and jumped. Again he sang, “HE-G×H-YA” and jumped; this was the way he traveled, he jumped by singing. At the first jump he went over the hill, then he said to himself, “This is too risksome; that man is dangerous.” Again he heard the song, “if a man-eater comes, I will kill him,” and he said, “I think I had better go home, he may kill me.”

SKAGÉDI turned around, and singing, “HE-G×H-YA” jumped, but he didn’t go where he wanted to. He came down near the man-eater’s house. Hearing the man-eater’s song he was frightened and singing in a whisper, “HE-G×H-YA” he jumped, but again he didn’t go where he intended; he came down in front of the man-eater’s house—the man-eater’s song was drawing him there. He heard the mallet strike the wall, and singing, “HE-G×H-YA” to get away he jumped and came down at the door. The man-eater opened the door and said, “Come in!”

SKAGÉDI was terribly frightened; singing “HE-G×H-YA” in a low whisper he jumped to get away, but he went straight into the house.

“I am not going to kill you,” said the man-eater, “I want you to eat some of my pudding.”

SKAGÉDI ate a good while, then stopped.

“You must eat all of the pudding I have given you,” said the man-eater. “That is my rule.”

SKAGÉDI ate more of the pudding and then wanted to stop, but the man-eater said, “Hurry, I must go away, eat quickly.”

SKAGÉDI finished the pudding.

“The next time I invite you,” said the man-eater, “if you start you must come, not start and try to turn back.”

SKAGÉDI was so full of pudding that it was night before he got home; he could jump only a few feet at a time.

The man-eater had always gone South to hunt for game, but now he went North. After a while he came to an opening in the forest, and, in the middle of the opening, he saw a house.

“I have never seen that house,” thought he. “I will go and find out who lives there.”

In the house was a very old man. “Hello!” said the man-eater, “I have come to visit you.”

“I have never seen you before,” said the old man.

“No. What are you doing here?”

“I have lived here always, I am a betting man.”

“What game do you play?”

“I play hide-and-seek, and bet heads.”

“Oh, that is the way you bet! I am alone in the world, but I don’t want to have my head cut off. Can I come to life afterwards?”

“No, you will stay dead.”

“Well, I will go and talk with my uncle about this. I will come back.”

By his “uncle” the man-eater meant SKAGÉDI. He went home, made a pudding, struck the kettle twice and had enough for two, then he went to the post of the house, beat time on it with the mallet, and sang, “I want my uncle to come and help me eat this pudding.”

SKAGÉDI heard the song and said to himself, “I am hungry, I will go.” He sang “HE-G×H-YA,” took a short jump and was outside of the door. Turning in the direction of the man-eater’s house he sang, “HE-G×H-YA,” jumped and was down the hill. Then he listened and wondered if the man-eater really called him. Again he heard the song, then he said, “Oh, he means me!” He sang “HE-G×H-YA,” jumped and was near the man-eater’s house. Then he heard the blows of the mallet and was so frightened that he sang “HE-G×H-YA” in a whisper and jumped to get away, but he didn’t go as he wanted to; he came down at the door of the man-eater’s house.

“Come in,” said the man-eater. “Yesterday I went toward the North. I had never been in that direction before, but I have killed everybody in the South so I thought would find out who lived in the North. I came to a house in an opening. In the house was a very old man, who said that he lived by betting. The man who loses the game loses his head also. He asked me to play. I told him I didn’t know the game, but I would ask you if you knew anything about it.”

“I know the game,” said SKAGÉDI. “My father was a great player, but at last he lost his head.”

“If you will help me,” said the man-eater. “I will help you. When you are hungry you can always come here and get something to eat; I will never harm you.”

“I will tell you what to do,” said SKAGÉDI. “The old man will hide first and you will have three chances to find him. Begin inside the house, but for your last chance say, ‘I have found you, you are up behind the sun.’ Then it will be your turn to hide. Go under the back of the old man’s breech-clout. If he finds you it will be a tie. Then he will go in at one end of the log on the fire and out at one end of the house, I don’t know which end. That is your chance.”

SKAGÉDI ate his pudding and went home.

The next morning the man-eater hit the post and sang, “Now I must be strong and kill the old man who bets heads.”

He went to the house in the opening and called out, “Hello, my friend!”

The old man looked up, and said, “Oh, you have come again. Will you play a game with me?”

“I will play.”

“What do you do at home?”

“I hunt.”

“Do you find enough game?”

“Yes, I go in every direction and kill everybody I find.”

“You kill animals?”

“I do not, I kill men and witches.”

“That is my way of living,” said the old man. “Now we will have a little sport. We will play hide-and-seek. If you find me and I find you it will be a tie, then we will have a foot-race, or we will pitch quoits to decide the game. I will hide first. Stand here and cover your head with a blanket, when I say Onen! throw off the blanket and hunt for me.”

The man-eater waited a while, when he heard, far away, "Onen;" he took off the blanket and found himself alone. He hit the fire with a mallet, and said, "You are under the fire" – No answer. He waited, then called out, "You are up behind the sun."

The old man came down, and said, "Now it is your turn to hide," and he threw the blanket over his own head.

The man-eater made himself small, crawled under the old man's breech-clout, then said, and his voice seemed far away, "Onen."

The old man looked everywhere. "You are behind that big star up there," said he. No answer. He went out and around the house and finding a crack in the house struck it, and said, "You are in here." No answer. Then he went into the house and taking his pipe, made of a wild-cat's head, said, "I will smoke. Maybe the smoke will tell me where to find that man."

He drew a long whiff, the smoke went toward the corner of the house where the corn pounder was. The old man struck the pounder and called out, "You are in the pounder." His three chances were gone.

The man came from the back of the breech-clout. The old man felt him move, and clapping his hand to his thigh said, "You were here!"

"I was."

"That was sport. Let's play again," said the old man.

"I have played long enough," said the man-eater, and, catching the old man by the hair he cut off his head. Then he thought he would look around and see what the man had been doing.

At the edge of the woods he found a great many bones. He stacked the bones up, then going to a tree gave it a push and called out, "Get up or the tree will fall on you!" Men sprang up and ran for their lives. All the people in the world heard the tree fall and knew that some one had killed the old man.

The man-eater burned up the old man's house and his body, then he carried the head home and put it up at the end of his house.

The next morning he thought, "Now I will make a pudding for my uncle."

He scraped a little chestnut into a kettle, struck the kettle with a switch and straightway the kettle was large and was full of pudding. Then he struck the post with his mallet and sang for SKAGÉDI to come.

SKAGÉDI heard the song, and said, "My nephew has killed the betting man." He sang "HE-G×H-YA" and with two jumps was at the house.

"What luck did you have?" asked he.

The man-eater showed the head, and said, "This is my luck!"

"Well, nephew," said SKAGÉDI, "that would have been your head if I hadn't helped you."

"I know it, and I will always help you and give you a plenty to eat. Will I have more trouble if I go farther North?, Have you been in the North?"

"I have been all over the world; two long jumps will take me anywhere. If you have trouble I will help you."

SKAGÉDI went home and the next morning the man-eater went North again. He passed the house he had burned and went on till he came to an opening and saw a woman standing on a log that was lying on the ground. The woman had great eyes and was looking around in every direction; if she saw anything, even a bird or a mouse, she called out, "I have caught you, I think you are a man?" When the man-eater saw her, he dodged behind a tree. if the bird or animal she called to were a man, her words made him take his own form, then she squeezed his heart and killed him.

The man-eater had never seen such a woman. He thought, "That is a dangerous woman, I will go home," and he crept away. The next morning he sang and danced and his steps shook the world and frightened everybody.

SKAGÉDI said, "My nephew has come!"

The man-eater cooked a bit of the chestnut he had stolen from people in the South and when he had switched the kettle and made it large, he said, "Now I will sing for my uncle. I want to ask him about the woman who stands on a log."

SKAGÉDI heard the song and, singing "HE-G×H-YAH" he made a jump and was over the trees and down the hill. Then with a whispered song and a short jump he was in the man-eater's house.

While he was eating, his nephew said, "Off in the North there is a woman who stands on a log and says to every mouse or bird or living creature she sees, 'I have caught you, I think you are a man.' I have never seen such a Woman, I want to talk to her."

"I know that woman," said SKAGÉDI. "She caught my brother. If she sees you first, she will catch you and squeeze your heart. If you are weak, she will kill you; if You are very strong you may come home, but you will be sick."

"I want to kill that woman," said the man-eater.

"Well," said SKAGÉDI, "I will help you if you will promise to stop killing people. It is wrong to kill people and eat them."

"I was brought up on such flesh," said the man-eater. "I couldn't live on game as you do. I will try, but I don't want to starve."

"You must come and eat of my kind of food," said SKAGÉDI. He went home and cooked fat deer meat, then he sang, "The man-eater must come and eat! the man-eater must come and eat."

The man-eater heard the song and started. When he came into the house SKAGÉDI placed deer meat before him, and said, "You must eat it all, that is my rule."

He ate the meat and went home. For a time he was sick, then he felt better and was hungry. He tried to eat some of his own kind of meat but the first bite made him sick. He thought he would go and ask SKAGÉDI what he could do to get well. He was so weak that he was a long time getting to the house on the hill.

SKAGÉDI said, "Try my meat," and he gave him bear meat. He ate it and felt stronger.

"I will come to-morrow and eat more of your kind of meat," said he. "If it doesn't make me sick, I will hunt deer and bears hereafter and let men alone."

The next morning he took a mouthful of his own food. It made him sick. "I will eat no more of this kind of meat," said he, and he went to SKAGÉDI, and said, "Hereafter I will eat your kind of food. Now tell me about the woman."

SKAGÉDI said, "When you come to the opening you must call a mole, go inside of it and tell it to take you to the

log. When the mole gets to the log, jump out and say to the woman, 'I have caught you!'"

The man-eater went home, took down the heads stuck up around the house and, pushing them along with a stick, for he was afraid of getting sick if he touched them, he got them far away from the place. Then he went off and killed a deer, came home, cleaned up his kettle, cooked the deer meat and ate it with relish.

The next day the man-eater went to the opening and found the woman standing on the log watching for a fly, bird, a mouse or any living thing so that she could sing out, "I have caught you! I think you are a man."

He called a mole and told it to carry him under the ground and come up near where the woman stood. He made himself small, went into the mole and when it was right at the log, he sprang out and called, "I have caught you!" That minute he took hold of the woman's heart and squeezed it. She screamed and begged him not to kill her.

"You must go home," said the man, "and on the way you must sing, 'We will have a dance, we will have a dance!'"

The woman started and as she traveled she sang, "We will have a dance." Her sisters heard the song and said to one another, "Our sister has been beaten, she is sick."

The mother sent the youngest sister to tell an old medicine man to come and cure her daughter. He asked what the woman's song was and when told he said, "You must notify all the people in the world and have a great dance for your sister."

The dance was called and food made ready. The woman came and danced, but all at once she fell to the ground and died.

The man-eater saw a great many bones around the log where the woman had stood. After working a long time he got the bones into a pile, then going to a nearby tree he called out, "Get up or the tree will fall on you!"

Men and women sprang up and started to run, but he called them back and sent them to their homes.

SKAGÉDI's father and mother and his brother were in the crowd, so was the man-eater's wife. When SKAGÉDI saw his relatives he was glad.

The man-eater never ate human flesh again.

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