

The Story of Estivill

Towards the end of winter on the Naas, in the winter had been so hard, that the people food was running out. A woman who lived near the mouth of the river decided she would go & see how her daughter fared who was married, & lived in a village some way up the river. At the same time, the daughter was concerned for her mother, & so it happened they both set out one morning to visit each other. Towards afternoon the daughter saw something walking towards her on the ice - It did not seem like an animal, & as it drew near she knew by the gait that it was her mother.

In the course of conversation, it transpired that the one village was as badly off for food as the other; in both places the people were not liking to turn home so soon, they decided to stay the night where they were; & so they found a fir tree with overhanging branches, & they cleared away the snow, spread moss on the ground, & made a fire to keep them warm through the night. Close by, they found one wild rose berry, & they divided this in half, & after keeping it in their mouths as long as they could, they swallowed & felt better.

Very early next morning, the mother got up & gathered wood for the fire, & lying on the snow she found a wren, which she brought back, & they plucked it, & roasted it on a stick over the fire.

early the daughter thought she saw something moving, but she did not tell her mother. When the mother got up to make the fire, she found grouse, which they roasted, & when they had eaten, they felt their strength returning. Again the following morning, the girl thought she perceived something, & when the mother went out, she found a mountain goat, so they skinned it & divided it up, eating only the liver & heart & lungs. They made a smoke house of boughs, & smoked the remainder of the meat, & the skins made them warm blankets. In like manner they found each morning another animal. First a small sheep, then a larger one, then a big ram, some black bear, & finally a grizzly bear. They ate only the heart, liver & lungs, carefully drying & saving the rest, till there was a big stack of dried meat.

Then a strange young man appeared at the camp, & asked them if they had enough meat. So they replied that they had all they needed. Then he told them he would not send any more; & that it was he who had sent the animals to them & that he was the "lucky bird" of the mountain. When a hunter hears the bird in the mountain it brings him good luck. Then he told the girl that she would have a son, & he would be a lucky man always. So he disappeared & they could see the Lucky Bird flying away.

pack of dried meat each, & bade each other
 Goodbye, & set off on the ice, each for her own
 village; for the daughter said: — "I must go & see
 how my husband & children do; by this time
 they may be dead of starvation"

Towards evening they reached their village
 where the people were in a bad way from hunger.
 They were heartily welcomed, & the meat was
 distributed to all. Then they got the young men
 of the villages, & the strong young women, & they
 set off — a party from each village, & they met at
 the camp, & divided up the meat evenly betwixt
 them, & carried it back to the villages. Then the
 woman & her daughter sold the meat to the
 other people, receiving in payment furs —
 martens, mink & beaver.

In due course the daughter had a baby boy
 & she called him Esti-will, after the lucky Bird
 who had sent them the meat when they were
 starving. The child grew up, & his father taught
 him a little bow & arrow, & he learnt to shoot
 small birds. As he grew older, his father taught
 him a bigger bow, & he was able to shoot better
 than any man in the village.

When he was grown to be a young man, the
 villagers brought tales of a white bear seen in
 the mountains, & so sure was Esti-will of his
 luck, that he decided to go after it & shoot it.
 Though many had tried to, & failed. When he
 came on the bear, he let the arrow fly carelessly

& it glanced off the bear's fur. Next time he
 was more careful with his aim, but the arrow
 only glanced off again. Then the bear began to
 speak, & besought Esti-will to follow it. They
 off over the mountains, Esti-will following on his
 snow shoes, leaping from crag to crag - They came
 in sight of a fair village, with totem poles in
 front of the houses. The bear led him down,
 disappeared into the largest house. Esti-will
 could hear voices inside asking: - "Have you
 brought him?" & another voice replied "He is
 outside." Two young men came out, & told him
 the chief wanted him to come in & eat. So
 he went in, & the chief spread a new mat for
 him to sit on, & the slaves brought him food.
 Then the chief told him how he had heard
 his fame as a hunter, & how he had sent his
 daughter in the form of a bear to bring him to
 the village; & so he prevailed on Esti-will to stay
 with him, & gave him his daughter to wife.

Early one morning the chief came to his
 daughter, & asked if Esti-will still slept, & she
 replied that he had been up for some time. The
 chief then said she was to tell him to bring her
 some water from the well - now this well was
 the forest behind the village, & no one who had
 ever gone there had come back alive. The girl
 went to Esti-will, & gave him her father's message
 beseeching him not to go. He replied that he
 was afraid; & so he took a bucket made of tigh

was devoted to Estiwill, & they set off, the slave leading the way. When they reached the well, Estiwill asked the slave why people were afraid of it. The slave replied that when anyone went to dip their pail in, the water became a whirlpool & dragged the person down & he was never seen again - Estiwill gave the slave a push from behind, & he fell in, the water whirled round & round, & dragged the slave under. Gradually it subsided, & before it became quite still, Estiwill dipped in his bucket, & brought the water safely back to the chief.

"Where is the slave?" asked the chief. "He came on before me," said Estiwill. Then the chief lifted a board from the floor of his house, & there was the dead body of the slave, floating underneath. The chief made the young man lift him up, & lay him on the floor. Then he passed his arm over him four times in a half circle, & the man opened his eyes, & came to life. So Estiwill continued to live with these people, & won both fame as a hunter, & their love, for he was a good man as well.

Early one morning, the chief asked his daughter if Estiwill were still sleeping, & she replied not, the chief said he wanted him to go up the mountain, & bring him the flesh of a mountain goat. She besought Estiwill not to go, because it was not possible to climb the crags on that mountain; but Estiwill only

stick, club, bow & arrow, & set off up the mountain. When he got to the foot of the crags, he put on his snow shoes, & leaped from crag to crag, & so reached the top. There he stuck his walking stick in the ground, & hung his coat on it, so that the people below might see that he was safely at the top. He set off with his club only, & soon he came on a circle of a couple of hundred goats, & one in the middle, dancing. Esti-will took his club, & killed all the goats, but two, which escaped. Then he skinned them, & took the layer of fat from the stomach of each, & wound it tightly round his walking stick, & the carcasses he threw down the cliffs. Then he put on his snow shoes, & took his walking stick, & leaped from crag to crag, till he reached the bottom; & so he came to the chief's house. He stuck the walking stick in the ground outside, & went in, & asked for the servants to bring him food. Then the chief asked if he had killed any goats. & Esti-will told the slaves to bring in his walking stick. It was so heavy, they could only carry it with difficulty. They unwound the fat, layer after layer. Then the chief called the young men, & told them to go to the foot of the crags, & carry back the carcasses.

When the Chief found that he could not kill Esti-will, he accepted him willingly, & asked him if there were anything he wanted. Esti-will said he would like to go back to his home to see his father & mother; so the chief offered to show him the way. He took him outside, when the servants

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a certain mountain, he should start out, & follow on till he reached the salt water. The sun came over the mountain, & then it rose up in the sky again, taking Esti-will up with it, though he was unaware of it. After a while he found himself in a grassy clearing, close by the sea shore, & he waited there in hopes that a passing canoe would take him off.

While waiting, he killed a couple of black bears & hid their bodies in a tree. Then a canoe came along the beach - in it were a father & another of their family, who were going from Kitkatta the roads for the opening of the oolican season. The father put the children out of the canoe & ran round the beach & warm themselves, & he & the woman followed with their belongings. The children found Esti-will sitting under a tree, & ran & told their father not to be afraid that it was a good man. The father went over & asked Esti-will to join them, which he did willingly.

Esti-will asked them if they had any food & they replied that they had none, for the winter was just over, & they had finished their supply. Esti-will told them to fetch ^{one of} the bears, & they roasted some bear meat, & were glad. They stayed there a few days to rest, & Esti-will killed another bear. Then the father, in his gratitude offered him his daughter to wife; & so he took her.

Then they got into the canoe, & set off for the

Esti-will take a paddle in his hand. Before he reached the mouth of the Raas, Esti-will snatched them and put him ashore. He told them to take the canoe round the point, & wait for him; & when he came back to the canoe, he had two bears - at which the others marvelled, for it was yet early in March, & the bears still in their winter quarters.

They came to their camping ground on the Raas, each village to its own camping ground. The other Indians were amazed to find that they had four bears; so they divided the meat among them, & the others were glad, for they were short of food.

They were all one, & when they had saved all the oil & fish they needed, Esti-will told his father in law that he would like to go up the river to see his father & mother, & that he would only stay there a few days, when he returned, they all set out for Kitkatla, where Esti-will settled down with his new wife; his fame as a hunter was as great as before.

Now Esti-will had three brothers in law, & they knew he was a lucky hunter on land, but they thought his luck would not hold on the sea, as he was not used to it. They then told him, one summer day, that they were going to hunt sea lion, & they asked him to go with them. So Esti-will took his snow shoes, & the snow shoes, & went to some rocks about seven miles out.

By the time they got out, the wind had sprung up, & there were heavy seas washing over the rocks, & the brothers decided that it would not be safe to land. However, Esti-will took his bow & arrow, & put on his snow shoes, & leaped on the rocks quite easily; & there he shot many sea lions, & the brothers gathered up the bodies till the canoes were quite full.

The eldest brother then spread his matting sail, & set off home, & the second did likewise. Although Esti-will was still on the rock, but the youngest brother stayed, & besought Esti-will to come home with him. However, he would not, for he had not yet had his fill of hunting, & so the boy set off alone, leaving Esti-will on the rock. The next morning he felt something climb up his sleeve, & a voice said: - "My grandfather asks you to come & have something to eat." but he could see nothing, & so he went to sleep again, but twice more he heard the voice, & felt something at his arm; & the third time he uncovered his head, & saw a little mouse, which disappeared among some grass, which was growing on the rocks, & Esti-will followed.

Lifting up some grass, he found steps made of rock leading down underground, & he went down the steps; & there he found a

made him welcome, & gave him food, & they told him how some of them were very sick. Esti-will found his own arrows sticking in them, he pulled them out, & the sea lions were grateful & so Esti-will stayed with them for some time.

Then he thought he would like to go back to his wife, & he asked the sea lions for a canoe, but they said that many of their canoes were leaking - how their canoes were the stomachs of the sea lions, & Esti-will had pierced them with his arrows. However, at last, they found one that was not leaking, & Esti-will blew up, & got inside, & tied a rope round the top. They cautioned him when he felt himself knock against the rocks, to turn over, & he would be all right; & so he said goodbye & went off. When he felt himself rubbing against the rocks, he turned over in his canoe, & soon heard the swish of waves on a sandy beach. Having been cautioned by the sea lions, he waited till the second wave had washed him up before he undid the rope, & came out of his canoe. (Now the sea lions had warned him, when he got back to his own people, never to tell them what he had eaten while he stayed with the sea lions.)

Esti-will found himself by a salt lake, so far from his home, & there he remained for a little while. One day he heard a woman sobbing, & he came up to her, he found it was his

wife; & she was weeping because she believed him to be drowned. He told her not to stop weeping, but to go home, & the next day bring his tools, & some food & some fire; & so she did & he told her, & went back to the village.

Next morning, she started off very early with some dried salmon, & his tools, & the fire in shell, & their baby boy on his back - Her brother asked her where she was going, & she told that she was going into the woods to burn the tools as it is the Indian custom to burn a dead person's belongings. Esti will sent her back to village, telling her to come back & tell him what the brothers were going to shoot sea lion again. He took his axe, & cut down a cedar tree, & fashioned two pin back whales, & breathed on them, & they came alive. They dived in the salt lake, & swam around a little, but came up bellies up, for they were dead. He took them, & cut them up, & burned them.

Next time he cut down a hemlock tree, & fashioned two whales from it, with the same result. Then he used spruce, & alder, but they too, died. Then he found a yellow cedar, & made two whales from it, & these dived into the salt lake, & started to swim out to sea; but Esti will whistled, & they came back.

That evening his wife came to say that he was going to hunt sea lion the next

day, when she had gone home, he instructed the
 whales, & told them to go out to the rocks next
 morning, & when the brothers were going home
 they were to come up under the canoes of the
 two eldest, & sink them; but they were to go on
 on either side of the canoe of the youngest, &
 bring him safely in. The whales did as he
 told them, & the two elder brothers were
 drowned, but the youngest came speedily to
 land.

Low Isti-will came back to the village,
 settled down with his wife once more, but she
 was always curious to know about his life
 with the sea lions, & most particularly, she
 wanted to know what food they had given
 him to eat. At length, to silence her, & in
 spite of the advice of the sea lions never to
 disclose what food they had given him, he
 told her that they had fed him on rock cod.
 As soon as he told her, the bones of the cod
 stuck out around his throat, & he died.