
Version 11, told by Lily Birckle

The Narrator

Lily Birckle is an intelligent, pleasant woman who is probably in her late fifties. She is married to a Frenchman who came over to help the Jaquot brothers about the time of the First World War. The couple now live at Haines Junction (or Mile 1016), but for a long time they were at Burwash Landing. Lily's mother was a Southern Tutchone from Champagne, who became a shaman at the time of Lily's birth. She and Lily were members of the Crow moiety and Lily is a classificatory sororal niece of Albert Isaac. Her father was an Atna from Copper Center, Alaska, who had come to Yukon early in the twentieth century. Lily and her siblings grew up in the White River and Burwash Landing area.

Although I had been in Haines Junction in 1966, I had not visited Lily until the winter of 1968. She told the story (which follows) on my second

The Story

They say that she was a young girl too, I guess. She always goes way up in the mountain to get some berries. And that bear always poops on the road there.

[The girl says], "You always poop right there!" And she jumps over it all the time.

Finally, later on, she gets some more berries I guess. And all the people had gone down. And she spills her berries. And they had started down long ago. And she picks up the berries I guess. The people are gone.

Then a young, very pretty young boy comes there. That bear comes and turns to a man. And after that he tells her,

"Let's get married!"

So they get married, I guess.

So in the fall they go around. And

visit to her, on the 15th of February. She was baby-sitting for two of her grandchildren and for some other children too, and she sat throughout the afternoon holding a small part-Chihuahua dog on her lap. We first looked at Glave's pictures of older Southern Tutchone; then Lily volunteered the story of how Crow got the sun. Next we discussed some aspects of kin-behaviour, and finally I asked her if she knew the story of the girl who married the bear. She did, and she seemed to enjoy telling it, although as I have explained she cut it short because it was getting late in the afternoon, and she had not yet prepared her husband's supper.

Lily's English is quite good, although like most other Indians she scrambles her pronouns. She speaks rather rapidly but very expressively.

they eat gophers all summer.

So after that the girl is going to have a baby. So way up on the hill like that [points], they dig a hole for winter.

Then after, in the summer time, that bear always goes out at night time. And finally he comes back.

Q. Does he look like a bear?

A. That girl wakes up and sees a real grizzly bear sleeping alongside her. [Lily acts out the girl looking down beside her and discovering herself in the arms of the grizzly.]

After that, they wake up in the morning, and the bear turns into a man.

The girl asks him, "Why did you fool me?"

"What for did you jump over my poop?" he asked her. "That's why I

The Girl Who Married the Bear

did it." So she knows he's a bear.

So they have a den, and they sleep in the winter time. It seems like one night—one month—I guess.

So after that, he tells her to go out in the winter time, just like a bear goes out. And he tells his wife,

"Go outside, and look and see if the snow really melts."

So she makes a snowball and rolls it down from the den.

So that bear goes back in there and sleeps again. And that bear says he dreams about that,

"What for did you make a mark like that? Did you do something out there?"

"Yes," she said. "I made a snowball."

"My brothers-in-law are going to kill me," he says.

Then she has three little bears in there. There is fur on them [indicates on the top of the hands]. Feet [another gesture]. Three.

Then after that, the bear's wife knows that her brothers always go there to hunt sheep. That's why they make the den there.

The bear says, "It looks like somebody goes back and forth right here. Why did you say 'I like it here for a den?' " So there are lots of those marks.

She has three brothers who go way up for sheep, and they see the marks there. So they have a little dog, a small little dog, that gets after the bears all the time. [Lily points to a small dog that had spent the afternoon in her lap.]

"They have some kind of dog. Four Eyes is coming out!" the bear says. He dreams that morning. He is not going to do anything.

"I am going to go out, and they are going to kill me!" he says.

Q. What does he mean by Four Eyes?

A. [Lily explains that this refers to a dog with a white mark about each eye.]

Afterwards, the dog comes and barks and barks. After that—he has teeth you know, like a . . . rifle. [Lily is puzzled by the best word to use and by how to explain that he can take his teeth out and hang them up.] Like a rifle, I guess. He gave them to his wife [gesture of removing canines].

"I am going to go out. They are going to kill me," he says.

So he goes out, and they kill him. They shoot three arrows inside his den. Their sister ties them together and puts them right in front of the den. The youngest brother—I guess they tell him to go get the bows and arrows. The other two skin the bear. So he goes back and sees the bows and arrows tied together in front of the den. Gee! He got so scared!

She is in there, and she has no clothes on. And she asks from way in there,

"Are you my brother?"

Her youngest brother says he is.

"That's your brother-in-law, the one you killed! When you cut his head off, make a big fire. Throw it in the fire! And then tell my mom to make her grandchildren three sets of clothes. And make one for me. And come up tomorrow morning, and give me the clothes!"

He comes back and tells his brothers, "Gee! That's our own brother-in-law we killed. Our sister is in the den—the one we lost long ago. She wants my mother to go up and get her grandchildren." The two brothers just sit there and have nothing to say.

Just like this time they eat the bear.

Her mother comes up, and she brings clothes.

And so she stays away from those people [at first]. It's pretty hard for her.

Appendix: The Story and the Narrators

After that, in the spring time, oh, her younger brother bothers her all the time.

“Come on sister! Make yourself like a bear! Let’s play around! ”

He bothers her. Finally she gets tired.

“O.K. I’ll turn to a bear,” she says, “if I act like a bear! ”

O.K. he has a little bow and arrow, and he thinks he is going to play with his sister.

And his sister turns to a bear, and the three little cubs [too]. And they just play around in the willows, and she kills her brother.

They can’t do anything. They let her go. And she goes with her three little cubs. That’s the end of the story. It’s a good story, that one there.

A. to Q. My dad told the story; he told all the stories.