

## The Kiwakw and the Soup

### Overview:

This story is about the monster Kiwakw [kee-WAKW], who is made to believe that it is a grandfather to the woman it was going to eat! The woman melts the monster's heart with kindness and turns it into a wonderful grandfather. The story includes themes of observing and listening, showing compassion and empathy, and sharing with others. Note: There are some graphic moments in the story (monster eating people, blood dripping from the monster's face.)

### Story:

One of the great monsters in our stories is called the Kiwakw. Kiwakw used to be a human being, but for some reason—maybe its heart was broken, maybe it was greedy or selfish—its heart turned to ice, and the human became a cannibal monster. The Kiwakw wandered through the forest, and any time it saw someone, it would scream. The scream was so terrible that if you heard it, you would freeze in place, and then it would eat you.

Now in those days, the tradition was that when a young man and a young woman got married, they would make a canoe, go to the north, build a wigwam, and spend the winter together. And if they still liked being with each other at the end of that winter, they stayed married. Otherwise, they would go their separate ways. So this young man and woman did that! They went to the north and built a wigwam next to a lake. Each day, the man would go out hunting, and each day, the woman would walk out on the ice of the lake, make a hole, and fish, which was good because she was good at fishing. But her husband was not that great at hunting! So he often came home with nothing, but there was always food cooking in the pot inside the wigwam.

As she sat at the lake one day while her husband was off hunting; she was looking at her reflection in the water and thinking, "I'm pretty good-looking; my husband is lucky to have me." Then she saw something that froze her. She saw not only her own reflection, but the reflection of someone looking over her shoulder, a huge being with blood dripping from its mouth and long fangs and great staring eyes. She knew what it was. She knew it was a Kiwakw. The Kiwakw is so hungry that it even eats his own lips off its face, so blood is always dripping.

Now, she could have tried to run, but it would have done no good. But then she got an idea; she stood up, looked up as if she was surprised, and said: "Grandfather, it's so good to see you." And she hugged the Kiwakw. The Kiwakw was so surprised it just stood there. Others had tried to fight it or run from it, but no one had ever called it a grandfather. It said, "Grandfather? I'm your grandfather?" She said "Yes, grandfather! It's so good to see you. You look hungry. Let me take you back to my lodge; come with me."

And she took it by the hand and began to lead it back toward her lodge. At that moment, on the other side of the lake, her husband came back from hunting. He hadn't had any luck, but he saw his wife with this monster walking right behind her. He thought, "Oh, I will save her, even if I have to sacrifice my life." He took an arrow and ran forward, ready to shoot it at the Kiwakw, so it would pursue him and she might escape. But the woman looked and said, "My husband... wait, this is my grandfather." And the man put down his bow and arrow and said, "My wife has a Kiwakw for a grandfather? I should have known more about your family before we got married!" But he trusted his wife. He came up to her, and she said, "Greet our grandfather." He said, "Oh,

hello, grandfather." The Kiwakw said, "Hello, grandson. Oh, glad to see you. I almost ate you by mistake; you are my grandson, though; this is good." And they took it into the lodge and sat it down; now the fire was so hot, it shrank back from it. So the man went around the back of the lodge and pulled the birchbark off so there was cold air coming in, and he propped up that birchbark between them and the Kiwakw.

So all they could see was the top of its head, and then the woman said, "Grandfather, you must be hungry; here, let me give you some of my soup." She dipped out some soup from the pot that was kept cooking and reached across the top. The Kiwakw was so confused it just took that soup and drank and suddenly screamed, "AAAAHHHHHHHH!" Steam came out of its mouth. It was so confused it handed the cup back, and she said, "Grandfather, do you want more?" She dipped another cup full and gave it to the Kiwakw, and again, it screamed, "AHHHHHHHH!" More steam came out! She served it cup after cup until finally, all the soup was gone, and they heard a THUD from the other side of that birchbark wall. The man looked over; the Kiwakw lay there. He said, "My wife, you've killed a Kiwakw with soup!" She replied "I did not know I could do that."

Then they heard a little weak "Ahhhh." They looked over that wall, and they saw it—not a huge monster, but a little old man in tattered clothing. They moved the birchbark aside, wrapped a blanket around him, warmed him up, and he said, "Grandchildren, I was that monster. But your kindness and your soup thawed my heart. And I will be a grandfather if you wish me to be."

And so it was that the old man lived with them as a grandfather, and they went back to their lodge in the village in the springtime and brought him with them. He had many stories to share and much knowledge to teach from his years as a Kiwakw. And so it is that story is told until this day of how kindness and maybe a little soup can even melt the heart of a monster.

### **Glossary:**

- Kiwakw [kee-WAKW]: A monster's name

### **Discussion:**

- What's a lesson you can learn from the story?
- Has anyone's kindness ever melted YOUR heart?
- What do you think turned the old man into a monster?
- What is something you can do this week to help other people?
- What is something kind you can do for nature?

### **Activity:**

- Have the children write words of kindness on cards for strangers, then have them set up a station by the library, school, or home, and share the cards with other people walking by. See their reactions and discuss with them how they felt.
- Write kind words for different things in nature, share them with others around you.