

RACCOON AND CRAWFISH

Apä'cīmīn (Acorn of the Red Oak, John V. Satterlee, Menominee) and Alanson Skinner

Na'na'kao, the crawfish, had a permanent village under the water in a large lake. One day he thought to himself, "I guess I'll take a trip and see what the world is like," so he crawled out on the dry land and followed along the beach. He crawled and crawled until he got halfway around, when he stopped a while to look.

In the meantime, A'sipun, the raccoon, came strolling along in the opposite direction. As he traveled, he kept his eyes fixed ahead of him, and he saw something moving. He watched it and made out that it was Crawfish. "Oh, *nimaa*, this Crawfish is out on dry land." Then he thought to himself, "I wonder how I can fool him, I am surely going to meet him. Oh, I know."

So Raccoon scuttled into the woods and got some rotten wood which he stuck up his nostrils, daubed on his mouth and filled up his eyes. Then he laid down on the shore and pretended to be dead.

After a while, along came Crawfish, crawling awkwardly. As he came along, he saw Coon and was surprised. "What's this? Who can it be?" But seeing no move or and trace of danger, he crept up and examined the object and recognized it as Coon. He drew very close indeed and stopped there motionless. He could see no breath from Coon and he saw that his enemy's mouth and eyes and nose were completely stopped up. Crawfish thought in his head that the punk wood was fly blows and then when he looked a little closer and pinched Raccoon he was sure that the maggots were in him.

"I must go home and tell my people," he said. So he began scrambling backwards, as fast as he could go. Then he was almost there, he began to shout, "Kuu'wû!"

"Hé," cried the others, "what can that be?"

"Kuu'wû!"

"What is the matter with that fellow, let's go and see."

"Kuu'wû!"

"Oh yes, maybe it's that fellow that went traveling. Perhaps he is coming back." And everyone came running out, to hear the news.

"Kuu'wû!"

"Oh Crawfish," cried the people, for the brave hero was now in sight. "What is it that you have to tell us?"

"I shall not tell you a word until Totop'ahakāo (a soft-shelled crawfish) places one of his daughters on each side of me. Then I'll tell you the truth," chanted Crawfish in a singsong voice.

"Good news," cried the others. "Let us hurry and tell Totop'ahakāo to get his daughters ready, to dress and comb them and paint their faces with vermilion."

Somebody ran to Totop'ahakāo's lodge and informed him and he straightway fell to dressing his daughters and adorning them with the most beautiful clothes. Crawfish had now come into the center of the village. "Let Totop'ahakāo now take his two daughters and place one on each side of Crawfish," cried every one. So the girls' mother led them forward. "Go now and sit beside him," she ordered. One was placed on the right-hand side and one placed on the left-hand side of Crawfish.

"Now tell us the news," demanded the people, for a great crowd had gathered. "The women have been given you as you demanded."

Then Crawfish began to chant in a singsong voice, as messenger and criers were accustomed to do:

"N'hau omus kaies pin'a'nokatau waio'n hau
At the time when I have fasted In

inipi mai atician yum uskiato nätamun kineticuminä ä-ä-ä-n!
my walks circling round the lake all at once I saw Coon.

He was lying down and I approached him and saw that his face was full! Yes, his eyes, his nose and mouth were filled with maggots. There he lies and he is dead."

Everyone heard him and shouted: "Oh, let us believe our traveler! Let us tighten our drum head and go and have a dance over it."

Nimaa, but they were pleased because their enemy was dead! When everything was in readiness, they set out with the *nänawetauwük*, or braves, in the lead, the chiefs next, and the women and children following in a great multitude, drumming and singing, and Crawfish, with the two beautiful daughters of Totop'ahakäo, one on each side of him, heading the procession. As they marched along, the braves were singing a *nänawetau* song:--

"Hauwiya! Hauwiya! Hauwiyaa! Hoi! Hoi! Hoi! Hoi!"

They twisted, stamped, and brandished their weapons and postured as braves always do. The women too, had their own comical little song, a squeaky little second part. *Nimaa*, but it was an immense parade! As they came nearer, Coon heard them and listened, where he lay. It took the Crawfish a long time, although they had not far to go, for they were so awkward on land.

"How far are we now?" asked the chief.

"Oh, very close," said Crawfish. Soon he pointed out Raccoon. "There he lies, the enemy of our people."

When they got up very close, they ceased to sing, and circled round and round Raccoon, dancing and examining him with their claws and feelers until they were convinced that he was dead.

Then they began to sing: "Ä'sipûna, here he lies dead with maggots in his mouth." The women chimed in: "Aiek'wäwäjiji! Aiek'wäwäjiji!" They circled again around his body and sang, "Here is Coon lying with his face full of worms! They are all in him! Maggots in his mouth, maggots in his nose, maggots in his eyes. Aiek'wäwäjiji! Aiek'wäwäjiji!" The last words were shouted in Ojibway in order to encourage the women to dance. And the multitude danced about Raccoon, while some of the braves crawled all over him, pinching him.

Coon did not stir though it hurt him dreadfully. It was awful about his nose and mouth.

Now, two of the bravest and most notorious warriors, as they were exploring his body, came to his buttocks, and one was so inquisitive that he tried to climb into his rectum, but he pinched so hard that Coon flinched, so this brave one backed out, shouting, "Ä'sipûn, tcepiskau,"

that is to say, "Raccoon flinched when he was pinched."

Now it so happened that there was another warrior who was pinching at the same place. "Not so," he cried, "this Crawfish felt me biting." However, the first Crawfish ran around informing everyone, but the singers took up his word derisively singing:

"Ā'sipûna nipunanimau tcepûna tcepiskauwa."

"Coon who is dead flinched when we pinched."

But the one who was telling about it went right on and met some crawfishes farther away. He whispered to them, "Raccoon flinched." He said this to his nearest relatives, who believed him, and all began to crawl slowly towards the water.

While this was going on, Coon observed it and thought in his heart, "Those over there will escape, I guess I had better get them now." So all at once he jumped up and ran to the water's edge, and those that were crawling over him were flung in every direction. He headed them off as he came to the water and chewed them up one at a time, *kûp, kûp, kûp, kûp*.

"Well that's so much done," said Raccoon when he finished, "I have got them all. I guess now I'll travel in the direction where they came from and see where they lived." Alas, the poor crawfish to whom two sweethearts were given, was eaten too, before he had a chance to enjoy them!

As Coon traveled along the shore, he saw something moving along the bank. "Oh," he thought, "have some more of those crawfish been left behind? I'll fix them." When he got close he saw two tiny crawfish children no bigger than your little finger nail, the larger carrying the other on its back. They stopped when they saw him, and then they knew that their people, with whom they had not been able to keep up, were dead. So they began to weep, saying, *"Ā'sipûn, mina,"* that is, "Coon eat us up." Tearfully they besought him, since they no longer wanted to live.

"Oh, no," growled Coon. "I've got enough of you. I've more than enough of you in my belly. I'll eat no more of you for a while." Then Coon thought, "I guess I'll spare these two so that there will be some alive hereafter. I'll leave them to multiply." So he took the two little ones and threw them out into the deep, saying, "Remain there and multiply, and when I'm hungry, I'll hunt you up on the banks and eat you some more."