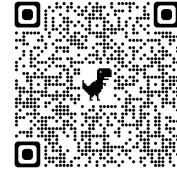


The Little Squirrel that Didn't Listen

Edited for text from multiple [oral tellings](#) by George Sqtuxulenuhw Seymour



Here's a story that I heard as a boy. It's about a community of squirrels that were getting ready to harvest food for the winter.

One fall evening, all of the squirrels gathered together and they had a meeting about harvesting for the winter. The plan was to get up at daybreak, have their first meal, then leave to harvest fruit and berries.

The next morning, everybody was up having their meal, the whole community, all except for one little squirrel.

His mother tried to wake him up, but he just rolled over and said, "All I need is a few more minutes sleep."

She tried again to wake him but he refused to get up. Finally the mother squirrel told her son, "I'm going go call your grandmother."

The grandmother came over, and told her grandson, "Time to get up! Everybody is leaving, the whole community of squirrels. We need to work as one. We are *nucamiat*, one whole, one heart, one mind. We all work together, happily and with a good heart, *cicuwatl 'i 'iyatl*. Everyone's share in the work counts."

But the little squirrel pleaded, "Grandma, all I need is a few more minutes sleep, that's all I need."

The grandmothe squirrel sighed, "Well, if you don't get up now, we're going to leave you."

But the little squirrel still didn't get up. "All I need is a few more minutes sleep, Grandma... I'm not afraid anyway, I know this land like the back of my hand. I'll be OK if I have a few more minutes sleep."

The grandmother squirrel sighed again and shook her head. "OK. We're leaving you."

So, they all left, and he slept... and he slept... and he slept.

His few minutes of sleep ended up being hours. He woke up just before noon, hungry and thirsty. But they had taken all the food and water with them and there was nothing to eat or drink.

Outside he found a trail and he followed it, picking berries as he went, eating just about everything that he was gathering. Finally, he met up with the rest of the community who were on their way home from a busy morning working together, gathering food for the winter.

The mother and grandmother saw the little squirrel and said, "We're all going home now and you better come too, just turn around and come home with us."

But the little squirrel had no plans to head home just yet, he was still hungry. "Oh no, no," he said, "I want to do my share of the work just like everybody else. I want to get some berries."

"But it's too hot," his family explained, "and we have picked along this trail already."



The little squirrel pushed past them and insisted, "I want to do my share of the work."

The grandmother called after him, "Well, make sure you're home before dark... and make sure you don't go past the boundary."

Without turning back, the little squirrel replied, "Oh no, Grandma, I'll never do that. I'll never go past the boundary, I know what's on the other side of the boundary and I'm not afraid of anything. I know this land like the back of my hand."

So they were on their way, and he went on his way.

As he went along the trail, he kept picking berries. He was eating most of his harvest, throwing the odd one in his basket and then carrying on, but most of the trail had been already picked clean.

And soon enough, after walking a long way, he came to the boundary. He looked at the other side of the boundary and it seemed like the fruit and the berries looked bigger and better and juicier on that side of the boundary. So, he climbed up on the highest tree to get a good look and he said to himself, "Yes. The food on that side *IS* bigger and better."

He remembered all of the stories he had heard about the **stleluqum**, the monster, that lived beyond the boundary, but he never really believed the stories. So, he looked all around very slowly, and thought: *No one can see me, there's nobody here to see what I'm going to do.*

So he leaped, flying across the boundary and landed on a tree on the other side. And sure enough, the fruit and berries *are* bigger, better and juicier here on the other side of the boundary. So, he carried on picking, moving from bush-to-bush and tree-to-tree.

It seemed like the further he went, the bigger and better and juicier the food was getting. Then, all of a sudden, he heard a voice that made the fur on his back stand on end...

"Hey little squirrel. Can you please share some of that nice food with me?"

It was the **stfelucum**, the monster he had heard stories about. The little squirrel was frightened and he took off leaping - one, two, three, four, five trees, maybe, hoping that the voice would not catch up to him.

But soon enough, the voice caught up again and said a second time, "Hey, little squirrel, I'm asking very nicely. Can you please share some of that nice food with me?"

But the little squirrel didn't stop to listen, he took off again, one, two, three, four, five trees or bushes, hoping the voice would not catch up to him, but this time the **stfelucum** caught up even faster.

"Hey lit.." ...but before she could say anything else, Little Squirrel grabbed a handful of rotten berries and threw them right in her face and took off again, getting further and further away from the boundary.

Each time the squirrel bounded away, the **stleluqum** seemed to catch up faster and faster. And when he paused to catch his breath she said again, "Hey little squirrel, I've been asking very nicely for you to share that nice food. And if you don't share part of that nice food, I'm going to catch you. And I'm going to eat YOU instead."

He couldn't see her, but he shouted out into the trees, taunting her. "You can't catch me, I'm just too fast."

But the monster only replied, "You're far away from the boundary and you're even further away from your home... and it's getting dark."

Little squirrel was feeling pretty frightened by this time, and most of berries he had collected had spilled from his basket while he had been leaping from tree to tree. He took off heading towards the boundary, and when he finally reached it, he turned around, stopping to hold his breath, listening to see if the monster was going to catch up to him.

He could barely see because it was getting so dark, and he couldn't hear anything except the beating of his own heart. So, he quickly started heading home. By the time he got home it was so dark, he couldn't even see the end of his nose.

And then, all of a sudden, just as he reached home, the door swung open.

It was his mother, looking concerned, but also relieved. "We were worried about you! We were going to send a search party out for you. Are you hungry or thirsty?"

"No." the Little squirrel replied. I'm going to go straight to my room."

So that's what he did. He went straight to his room... but only moments later, there was a knock on the door.

The mother frowned and wondered, "Who would be knocking at this time of the night?" So she opened the door, and sure enough, it was the monster.

The **stleluqum** - half-squirrel, half-monster, looked straight at the mother and asked, "Did you see a little squirrel come to this house?"

"No!" she cried, slamming the door shut.

But the door was no barrier for the **stleluqum**. It burst open and the monster went directly to the little squirrel's room... and took him...

And he was never seen by his family again.