

Learning Lessons

By Dez Johnson

Shuswap translation assistance by Phyllis Chelsea, Ivy Chelsea, and Julianna Johnson

Characters

Spue7e7 - He is playful and excited, he is a good father and a loving husband.

Cúcwle7 - Wife of Spue7e7 and mom of Kiki7. She is kind and responsible. She values the safety of her daughter and the wellness of her family.

Kiki7 - The young daughter of Spue7e7 and Cúcwle7. She is hopeful and optimistic.

Setekwe - A sasquatch, husband of Tswec and father of Qwelsellp. He is very wise and patient.

Tswec - A sasquatch, wife of Setekwe and mom of Qwelsellp. She is apprehensive and quick thinking.

Qwelsellp - A young sasquatch, she is daughter of Setekwe and Tswec. She is thoughtful and curious.

Elder - She is Kiki7 as an Elder now, telling her a story about when she was younger.

Grandchild – The young granddaughter of Kiki7, loves listening to stories and naive.

English Narrator - Narrates in English

Shuswap Narrator - Narrates in Shuswap

SCENE 1

English Narrator: When you tell a story, the language it is told in can affect it in subtle ways. After translation, details can be lost that the language provides. When a story is told in the original language, you learn more of the lesson from the story.

Shuswap Narrator: m-lexéy'emue, re squqlút ri7 me7 nékens re slexéyem, ne slexseýem me7 nékens re squqlut, re slexéyem p7ecw re ri7 sxepenwellén tem re slexéyem.

An Elder sits with a blanket on her lap. She has a Grandchild sitting with her.

Grandchild: Are sasquatches are real?!

Elder: Well? I'm not...

Grandchild: I wish I could meet one!

Elder [reluctantly]: Seeing them... maybe even holding a quick *conversation*... But to meet one of them? That would be a different story. That is something to be avoided.

Grandchild: How so? Have you ever seen one?

Elder: No, but it has been said sasquatches can be dangerous. They can be so nice, but they *are* magical and you should take care to avoid them. How about I tell you about when your slé7e met a sasquatch.

Grandchild: The great grandpa who...

Elder: Yes, that slé7e

Grandchild: Kyé7e is the story a real story?

Elder: Yes Hun, I was about your age when it happened.

(Harp sound)

A father and daughter sit around the fire. The fire is lighting up their faces, illuminating the night. Behind them you can see their teepee.

Spue7e7, eccentrically walking around the fire acting out his story.

Spue7e7: I was separating the sxúsem...
[Spue7e7 freezes]

(Record scratch)

Grandchild: Wait... Kyé7e, what's sxúsem?

Elder: It's a type of berry.

Grandchild: Have you eaten those berries?

Elder: Yes I have.

Grandchild: What do they taste like?

Elder: They're red and very bitter. *[Pause]* You've had them before.

Grandchild: I have?

Elder: Yes. The pink foam treat.

Grandchild: Oh! The gross foam!

Elder chuckles at that statement.

(Harp sound)

[The stage unfreezes]

Spue7e7: I was separating the sxúsem berries from the branches when I smelled it.

Kiki7: What did you smell dad?

Spue7e7: I smelled a wet, rotten blanket.

Kiki7 [confused]: What?!

Spue7e7: Come on, you know what I mean! A wild man! The sasquatches smell like wet rotten blankets!

Kiki7: No way!

Cúcwle7 enters carrying ts'pixle7cw in a dish.

Cúcwle7: It's true. My mom, your kye7e, was near one and she described it like that.

Kiki7: What! Please tell me, mom! You know I love sasquatches!

Cúcwle7: Later, listen to your father.

As Cúcwle7 prepares food for herself, Kiki7 takes food from Cúcwle7 and is about to start eating it when Cúcwle7 pauses her actions with her hand.

Spue7e7: Ta7a do an offering first.

Kiki7: Why? What's the point? It's just wasting food.

Cúcwle7: When you throw food into the fire you give it to your ancestors.

Spue7e7: Really? That's why?

Cúcwle7 [teasing]: You didn't know why? Do you ever listen?

Spue7e7: Yeah, I do! Nobody told me. I just always did it cause my dad said to do it.

[Beat]

Spue7e7: As I was saying, I smelled the sasquatch. Do you know what that means?

Kiki7: No dad, what does it mean?

Spue7e7: It means that there's a sasquatch nearby.

Kiki7: Really?

Spue7e7: Yes. That's why I can smell it!

Kiki7: How do you even know that? Have you met one?

Spue7e7: I've never met a sasquatch. How I know is I've met people who have and they describe them like that.

Kiki7: Dad you have to find it! And bring it here!

Spue7e7: I don't know if I can...

Kiki7: You have to! You can look while you're getting us food tomorrow! I have always wanted to learn more about sasquatch and their ways.

Spue7e7: Okay Kiki7 I'll try.

Kiki7 yawns.

Spue7e7: I think it's bedtime for someone. Go and wash in the river and mom will put you to sleep.

Kiki7 wipes at her eyes tiredly and gets up to sleepily walk off stage right.

Cúcwle7: Hey Spue7e7, you're not actually gonna go looking for a sasquatch right?

Spue7e7: Why not? I'll already be out hunting.

Cúcwle7: We're running out of food. You can't be wasting time looking for a sasquatch, all we have left is some jerky and some berries.

Spue7e7: why are you so worried? I've been hunting for this family since we had Kiki7

Cúcwle7: I know, but I can't hunt and Kiki7 really can't hunt. If you don't take this serious we will run out of food soon. Winter is coming.

Spue7e7: Okay. I won't spend the whole time looking for a sasquatch. I just want to make my daughter happy. How about when I get back, I started teaching Kiki7 how to hunt?

Cúcwle7: Sounds like a good plan. Maybe you could teach me too? We are so defenseless without you.

Spue7e7: Don't worry, when I get back, which I always will, you will have nothing to worry about.

(Record scratch)

Grandchild: Kye7e, what does Ta7a mean.

Elder: No.

Grandchild: Why not. Is it a no-no word?

Elder [chuckling]: Honey, it means no.

Grandchild: What's does me7e mean?

Elder: It means yes.

SCENE 2

English Narrator: Sasquatches are a rare occurrence for humans. To see one means you are chosen. When you see a sasquatch they choose to be vulnerable to you. That is why it is more common to hear or smell them and not see them.

Shuswap Narrator: ta7 ri7 skumtusts me7 swiktem re sqwext. wikt cwes re sqwext ri7. ctsenme7ikenkstst. Tl ri7 p7ecw es xillem es qeqnimene ell senwenc.

Spue7e7 is in the forest. He has a spear in his hand. He looks around the forest apprehensively. He calls out hoping the sasquatches hear him.

Spue7e7: Weykt! Hello, sasquatch! I don't come to hunt you. I just want to know more about you and your kind. At least can I see you to tell my daughter about it?

Setekwe enters behind the Spue7e7 not seeing him.

Spue7e7: Hello?! I mean no harm to you!

Setekwe: Hello. You are looking for me?

Spue7e7 is startled and falls to the ground. Setekwe looms over him.

Setekwe: Human? Are you okay?

Spue7e7 takes a calming breath then answers.

Spue7e7: Me7e just startled. Hello, sasquatch.

Setekwe: My name is Setekwe.

Spue7e7: My name is Spue7e7, are you really a sasquatch?

Setekwe: Yes I am a sasquatch.

Spue7e7: Am I dreaming? I never thought I'd actually see you!

Setekwe: Why wouldn't you see me?

Spue7e7: I've never seen one before. I've heard stories from my relatives, but...

Setekwe: You've never seen one. You want to know more? About what?

Spue7e7: You, your kind. Everything about you is so interesting and different.

Setekwe: We're not that different.

Spue7e7: What do you eat for breakfast?

Setekwe: I eat berries for breakfast.

Spue7e7: I eat meat for breakfast. Do you have a family?

Setekwe: I have a beautiful wife and darling daughter.

Spue7e7: I also have a wife and daughter.

Setekwe: See were not that different.

Spue7e7: [excitedly, but gets cut off] Do you...

Setekwe: [trying to calm Spue7e7] As you can't tell me all about humans, I can't tell you all about my kind. My experiences are personal and not at all universal of my kind.

Spue7e7: Yeah that makes sense.

Setekwe: Why do you seek out this knowledge Spue7e7?

Spue7e7: My daughter. She wants to learn about sasquatches.

Setekwe: Why not just talk to some of your relatives?

Spue7e7: My daughter is the world to me. She deserves the best. She's so cute you have to meet her. My wife just made her a doll and boy does she play with it.

Setekwe: What's it made of?

Spue7e7: My wife used some fabric and sticks.

Setekwe: My daughter made herself a doll.

Spue7e7: She sounds smart, just like my girl.

Setekwe: Oh my daughter is so clever.

Spue7e7: What did you daughter make the doll out of?

Setekwe: She made her doll out of many things. The body is made of sticks but she wrapped some fabric around the sticks. She used a willow for the head then tied grass around the willow to make hair.

Spue7e7: That's amazing. Your daughter sounds fantastic. Would you take me to your home to learn more? Why don't I visit your house then you come and meet my family. My daughter would really love that.

Setekwe: Sadly, I can't visit your family and you coming to my village would mean tremendous sacrifice for you.

Spue7e7: It doesn't matter, it means a lot to my daughter and I'll do anything for her.

Setekwe: Your daughter probably wants you home with her.

Spue7e7: She so badly wants to learn about you kind. If I stay I can share that with her. I want to be the best father and provide for my family in any way I can. If I go, she'll think it's worth the wait. I promise you.

Setekwe [apprehensively]: Come with me. [*Extends his hand to the Spue7e7 to help him up*]
Back to my village.

Spue7e7: A village of sasquatches! [*Spue7e7 takes his hand and gets up*]

Setekwe: Yes! Now follow me. We need to move quickly... pick up the pace.

*Setekwe and Spue7e7 leave the forest.
The lights go down*

SCENE 3

English Narrator: Families drift apart at times but family can come together and help one another.

Shuswap Narrator: kellewses re kwselk'tnews nek'u7eses kemell me7 pluk'entwecw es knucwentwecws.

Qwellsellp and Tswec are drinking tea. They sit around a fire inside their teepee.

Setekwe and Spue7e7 enter the teepee. Qwellsellp is first to notice her dad.

Qwellsellp: Papa you're home, but you just left to grab food.

Setekwe: I didn't end up doing that. I was about to catch some salmon when I heard him calling out for sasquatches, so I thought I would go and see what he wanted.

Tswec: Spue7e7 you can take a seat here.

Spue7e7 sits down.

Tswec: Qwellsellp would you go put the cups away?

Qwellsellp: Sure mom.

Qwellsellp exits stage left.

Tswec pulls Setekwe away from Spue7e7.

Tswec: You trusted him?! He was yelling madly in the forest for a sasquatch with a weapon in hand! You just invited him here to see your wife and kid.

Setekwe: Yes, valid point, but...

Tswec: Really? That was really stupid! Love, I need you to think. Do you believe he is a good human?

Setekwe: Yes I truly do. He has a daughter of his own... And a family. This is a good man.

Tswec: You believe he won't harm our daughter?

Setekwe: I'd never bring anything dangerous around her.

Tswec: You know how humans are Setekwe, they just want to see a sasquatch then they run home to tell everyone about it.

Setekwe: He genuinely wants to learn about us. His daughter is so fascinated with sasquatches. The way he talks about her is so cute.

Tswec: [sighs] Okay. I suppose he's okay to stay for a little bit, but warn me next time you plan on bringing a human home.

The two of them walked back to the fire place, where Qwellsellp has come back from putting away cups and was now playing with her doll.

Tswec shakes Spue7e7's hand.

Tswec: Nice to meet you, Spue7e7. What brings you here?

Spue7e7: My daughter wants to know as much as she can about sasquatches. Since she's so young she couldn't come with me but I will be here in her stead.

Tswec: Come sit. Have some tea.

Qwellsellp goes to eat some bread but the mother intercepts her with her hand.

Tswec: No, give an offering before you eat.

Qwellsellp: What's an offering?

Tswec: It's when you put a piece of any food we're gonna eat into the fire.

Qwellsellp: Why mom?

Tswec: Because, when you give an offering you give it to our ancestors so they can eat with us.

Qwellsellp: Oh. Okay.

Spue7e7: I always thought that sasquatches were so different... but I just taught my daughter about offerings.

Setekwe: Yes, you're on the right track, but there is more for you to learn.

(Harp sound)

(Lighting change)

It's the next day. Spue7e7 and Qwellsellp are sitting on the ground with materials for one doll.

Qwellsellp: Okay, so we have some sticks, two pieces of string, some grass for the hair, some fabric and a willow.

Spue7e7: Why is their only enough for one doll? If you make it I can't show my daughter how to make more for herself?

Qwellsellp: I was gonna show you then undo it then let you try.

Spue7e7: Why not just grab more of the materials to make another doll for yourself?

Qwellsellp: I already have one, there's no need to kill more plants.

Spue7e7: Yeah that makes sense. Let's get started.

Qwellsellp: It's pretty easy... First grab the willow and the sticks and bunch them. After, wrap the fabric then tie that all together with a piece of string. Now grab the long grass and bend over the willow head and tie that with the smaller string.

Spue7e7: Wow, it's amazing.

Setekwe enters stage with a bow in his hand. He spots Spue7e7 and Qwellsellp holding dolls by the fire.

Setekwe: What are you two up to?

Qwellsellp: I'm showing Spue7e7 how to make a doll

Setekwe: Spue7e7 the dolls looks good, [to Qwellsellp] thank you for teaching Spue7e7 how to make a doll

Spue7e7: Your daughter is very smart.

Setekwe: Spue7e7, would you help me gather food tomorrow?

Spue7e7: Sure. [To Qwellsellp] Thank you Qwellsellp, my daughter will be so happy all thanks to you.

(Lighting change)

(Harp sound)

Spue7e7 and Setekwe are in the forest.

Setekwe: So tell me Spue7e7, what do you normally do when hunting?

Spue7e7: Well, when I hunt I generally grab berries for snacks for my family, and as I do that I look for animals. Preferably a moose or a deer, generally ends up being rabbits or squirrels.

Setekwe: Why don't you just stay out long enough to hunt a deer?

Spue7e7: My family runs out of food quickly so I can't afford to stay out too long.

Setekwe: Why not have more people hunting so you can have more food?

Spue7e7: I've never taught either of them to hunt.

Setekwe notices a doe in the distance.

Setekwe (trailing off): That sounds... like a problem...

Spue7e7: What's wrong?

Setekwe: I see a doe.

Spue7e7: Where?

Setekwe points towards it. They pause to look at it. Then Spue7e7 nocks his bow. Setekwe is startled by this and pulls his bows down forcefully.

Spue7e7 (confused): What are you doing? It'll go away?

Setekwe: What are you thinking that's a DOE!

Spue7e7 (not understanding): So what? Don't you want to eat?

Setekwe: You don't kill a doe.

Spue7e7: Why not?

Setekwe: You should never kill a doe. She might have a fawn. In order to have more deer to eat, and to respect the food chain, you must leave the doe and fawns alone so they can't continue to create more deer.

Spue7e7: I have never thought about that. To think I've spent so many years doing something that hurts my family later.

Setekwe: Now you know. Guess what?

Spue7e7: What?

Setekwe: I see a deer... and it's a stag.

Deer is tentatively eating grass.

Setekwe: Go for it Spue7e7.

Spue7e7 nocks his bow and shoots the deer. They both walk to the deer and stand over it.

Setekwe [to deer]: Thank you for your sacrifice.

Spue7e7 [to deer]: Thank you for your sacrifice.

They close their eyes for a moment then nod and open their eyes.

Setekwe: We should probably get to gutting, so we can get moving soon.

Spue7e7: Yeah we are pretty far from your house, and with the deer slowing us down... **Setekwe:**

Hopefully we'll make it before night ends.

(Lighting change)

(Harp sound)

Nighttime comes and passes, it's the next day.

Tswec, Qwellsellp and Setekwe are sorting bundles of deer meat into bowls. Spue7e7 walks in stage right sleepy and yawning.

Spue7e7: Good morning.

Qwellsellp [teasing]: More like, good afternoon!

Tswec [scolding softly]: Spue7e7 and your dad got home pretty late with all this food.

Spue7e7: It's okay. What are you all up to?

Setekwe: We are sorting the meat into bowls.

Qwellsellp is holding a bundle of meat in her hand.

Qwellsellp: Where do I put this one dad?

Setekwe: Put it in the bowl for our neighbor. His family hasn't had deer for a while. Mostly just small animals and plants.

Qwellsellp complies.

Spue7e7: Why are you giving your neighbor food? Can he not hunt?

Setekwe: He can hunt, but we have so much. Truly others need food just as much as we do...

Qwellsellp: and sharing is important!

Setekwe: [to Qwellsellp] Yes it is. [To Spue7e7] It's important we share, not only to teach our children, but also to support our community.

Spue7e7: Yes that makes sense. So... What time is it anyways?

Setekwe: It's almost dinner. You sure do sleep when you try.

Spue7e7: What?! I slept the whole day? I want to do something productive for you, can I grab you wood?

Setekwe: We have enough wood. It's okay, you are here to visit and we are having a stay in day today. We are sorting meat, you can help though.

Spue7e7: Okay I can do that for you.

(Lighting change)

(Harp sound)

Setekwe [mad]: Why must we argue in the morning?

Tswec [mad]: Because I'm tired of him staying here. Are you not worried about his family and him being gone for so long? Every day he will say 'please just one more day'. Put your foot down and tell him to go. I know he said his daughter will wait, but how long is too long Setekwe?

Setekwe: Okay... I'll tell him to leave.

Spue7e7 enters.

Spue7e7 [chipper]: Good morning Qwellsellp, good morning Tswec, how was your sleep?

Setekwe: It was good I had a dream about-

Tswec huffs.

Tswec: Spue7e7 you have to leave. It's time to go home.

Spue7e7 [begging]: Please one more day.

Tswec: No! No more days. Pack up, it's time to leave. You need to go see your daughter, I bet Kiki7 wants to hear all about your adventure.

Spue7e7: Yeah she probably does. I have so much to teach her, what I have learned from you will be passed on. Thank you all for having me and teaching me. I feel like I have learned a lifetime of lessons in just three days.

Setekwe: Goodbye Spue7e7. We too have changed from our time together. I feel like I know much more about humans, and I'm sure Tswec will give humans more of a chance.

Spue7e7: Goodbye Setekwe.

They separate.

Setekwe: I'll miss you. We might not see each other again.

Spue7e7: I know, and I'll miss you too.

*Spue7e7 leaves stage right.
Setekwe watches him leave.*

Tswec: He stayed too long.

Setekwe: Yes, I feel bad for him.

Tswec: What will happen when he returns? How long has it been for his family?

Setekwe: Uh, he was here for three days so... [*Setekwe gasps*] Oh my.

Qwellsellp: What's wrong papa?

Setekwe: [*to his daughter*] We live in a world different from the humans. Our world is much slower than theirs. So when the Spue7e7 returns...

Tswec: It's getting late you should get to bed.

Qwellsellp: Okay, love you.

Setekwe + Tswec: Love you.

Beat.

Setekwe: What have I done...?

*Setekwe hugs his wife tightly.
Lights go down.*

SCENE 4

English Narrator: As time passes, every moment is fleeting and dreamlike. Every moment is important because it is the only time we can prove it is real. Each second must be enjoyed and lived. What we do at each moment, as we live and breathe. It is like a dream.

Shuswap Narrator: re su7ec-kt ri7, t'lucwes tsutkw es sumec- tsilsem te stemtumen.

It's Daytime and we see the opening scene, Sitting alone is Kiki7, who is now much older. She is drinking tea by the fire.

Spue7e7 enters, when he does, the daughter is in shock.

Spue7e7: Wife? You look different. What happened to your hair it used to be so long? Did you cut it while I was gone?

Kiki7 [disbelief]: Dad? Is that you?

Spue7e7: Kiki7?

Kiki7: Me7e what happened?

Spue7e7: what happened to YOU? You're so old? There's no way.

Kiki7 [mad]: where did you go?

Spue7e7: I was in the forest and I met a sasquatch. He brought me to his home and met his family. I was learning more about them. I was doing what you said you wanted. I was there for you!

Kiki7 [frustrated]: What! No that's not- why did you leave for thirty years?!

Spue7e7: I left for three days. I don't know who you are, but quit this joke.

Kiki7: This isn't a joke!

Spue7e7: Am I even in the right teepee? I'm gonna go, this is too much.

Kiki7: Ta7a you left for thirty years, you're not leaving again. You left to find that stupid sasquatch and you never came home.

Spue7e7: YOU wanted me to find it! You asked me to go and find it and tell you all about it. Well here I am. What the hell happened. This is crazy.

Kiki7: That was THIRTY YEARS AGO! Who cares?! How could you walk out on our family?

Spue7e7 (desperate): It was three days ago to me. You have to believe me. I love you and your mother. I would never abandon you for 30 years.

Kiki7: Seriously dad! Where were you? Sasquatches aren't even real!

Spue7e7: I'm sorry Kiki7. Where's Cúcwle7? I need to talk to her.

Kiki7: Mom's gone.

Beat.

Spue7e7: ...Mom's dead?

Kiki7: Mom disappeared five years ago in the forest hunting. She got really good for us, when you abandoned us she had to learn quickly to provide to us. But one day she didn't come home for three days I freaked out and I went to look for her... I never found her.

Kiki7 starts to cry.

Spue7e7 [quiet]: Kiki7, I'm so sorry. I...I I didn't mean to. I'm sorry I never thought... I love you.

Beat.

Kiki7 initiates a hug, she clings to her dad.

Kiki7: [*sigh*] I missed you so much. I have been alone for so long now.

The lights go down, the focus back to the Elder.

Elder: That is the story of your sle7e

Grandchild: What happened to him? What about his daughter?

Elder: He stayed in the village and rebuilt his relationship with his daughter. He watched as she got married and had her first kid. But he missed his wife and had a deep sadness for the 30 years he lost.

Grandchild: So what did he do?

Elder: Knowing his daughter was provided for, He continued his days looking for sasquatches. One day he just left and never returned from the forest.

Grandchild: Do you think he found a sasquatch again? Could he ever be reunited with his wife?

Elder: I'm not sure we will ever know. They're all just gone now.

Grandchild: So... are sasquatches real?

Elder: I'm not certain... But I want to hope sasquatches are real. I hope...

The lights go down.

The end.