

Switiiq cali Iiraat - Holy Water and the Devils

As Told by Clyda Christiansen

People don't believe in our religions, a lot of them. This old lady from home, Mrs. Green remember her? She was my foster mother's mother. She used to tell us herself, she never believed in what they tell her. She grew up, I don't know where she was from, mainland someplace. Cause mom and her used to be real close and she never believed in what they tell her, she was married to a white man. And this one-year they asked them to be caretakers for Uganik Cannery. One winter. And she was pretty young I guess, before she got Stella. Then they went to Uganik to be the watchmen up there for the winter. Well this Christmas time we have starrng, then after starrng they have masquerading, then after masquerading we have new years. I mean before new years we have *Krishenya*, that is when Jesus was baptized.

So this story is a very true story. And they used to tell us to bless your homes the night before that, 18th. 19th is the holiday. 18th they used to make holy water in church in the afternoon every year, at two o'clock in the afternoon. The reader from the church used to make holy water. Every year. And everybody would get holy water. Then they would go and bless their loved ones that were gone. Their graves. Everything. Bless the church outside, and then they blessed their homes. But this lady, Mrs. Green, never. She didn't believe in it. My mom tried to tell her, you got to bless your house. Nah, there is nothing like that. She didn't believe.

My momma would tell her:

Iiraat-ruq taiciqut unuku.

Those darn devils will come at night.

Unuku iiraat itkata alingciquten.

At night when the devils come in you will be scared.

The little devils will come into your house if you don't at midnight, tonight.
She didn't believe it.

So this one winter they went to Uganik to be winter watchmen, and it happened that she didn't go to bed right away and her husband went to bed that evening of the holiday evening. The 18th. And she went to bed just before twelve. And she happened to have a mirror, no wonder they used to tell us we could take a mirror to banya or something, she happened to have a mirror where she could see the door coming in from outside in her bedroom. But it was locked. And she was lying there she said, and her husband was sleeping already. And she was lying there, just maybe it was God that made her do it because she didn't believe, but while she was lying there she could hear all these noises outside. What is that noise she was wondering? And she looked around and while she was looking around the bedroom there when she heard all these noises. She happened to see, look at the mirror and she just froze she said. She just froze there. She was looking at it, and looking at it, and all these little things were coming into that door. Through that door.



It was the evil coming in. The devil. And a lot of them had one eye, one ear, one leg. But the main one was holding the fork, and had you know, real ears like we see them in pictures, and the tail. And she couldn't move.



Awa'i 12-kaug piak minaki angq'rlluteng. Angq'r-anguten amik pitatek'unaku.
Already then at 12:00, they went out. They left and almost could not fit out the door.

Allriluq suk...
One person...



She had one... She used to say, they were carrying one person that she recognized...from home, from Karluk, that had passed away. They were carrying him. And she never, she used to say she never remembered if she passed out, or if she went to sleep, or what.



Recorded by interviewer Jeff Leer
English transcripts by Michael Bach, 2013
Edited with Alutiq transcript and translations
by Alisha Drabek with Florence Pestrikoff, 2013
Produced by the Native Village of Afognak through a National Park Service
Tribal Heritage Preservation Grant