Coyote and the People Killer

As told by Ike Willard, recorded by Bouchard and Kennedy in Shuswap Stories



Coyote was travelling along looking for some food for his hungry family. He lay down and told his son to go to the river and get some water. The boy did as his father requested, but as he stood on the bank of the river he saw something floating in the water.



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He returned and told Coyote that he saw something that looked like a deer being tossed in the waves.



Coyote went down to the river and looked at the object in the water. It was a deer, so Coyote sent his son out to drag it to shore.



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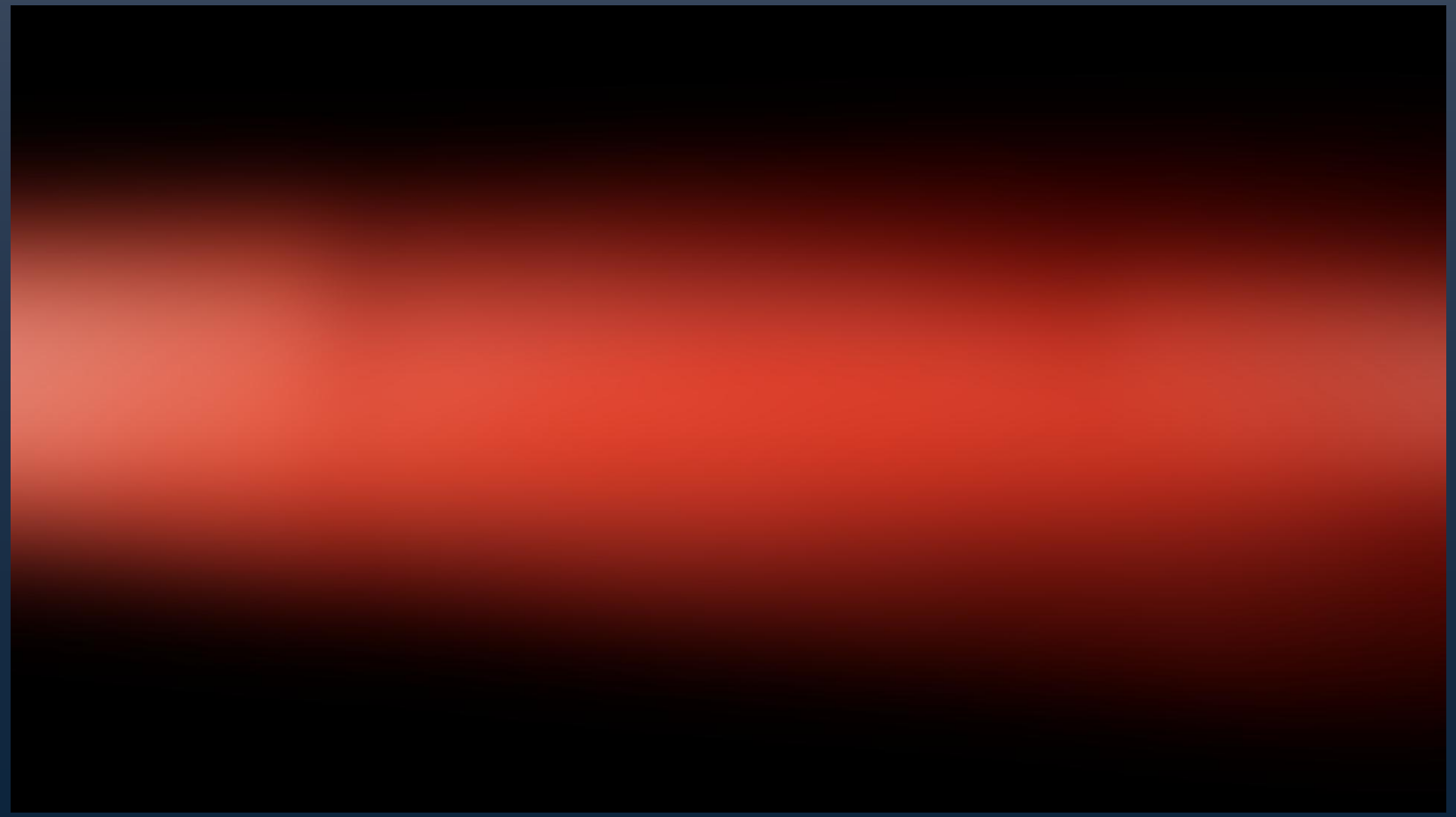
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The boy swam out into the river and hauled the large deer to the shore, where Coyote then dragged it up the bank and began to skin it.



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“Hold one end of the animal while I try to skin it.” Coyote told his wife, Mole. While he cut up the deer, the stingy Coyote was trying to think of a way by which he could have it all to himself. He splashed some of the deer’s blood on his wife.

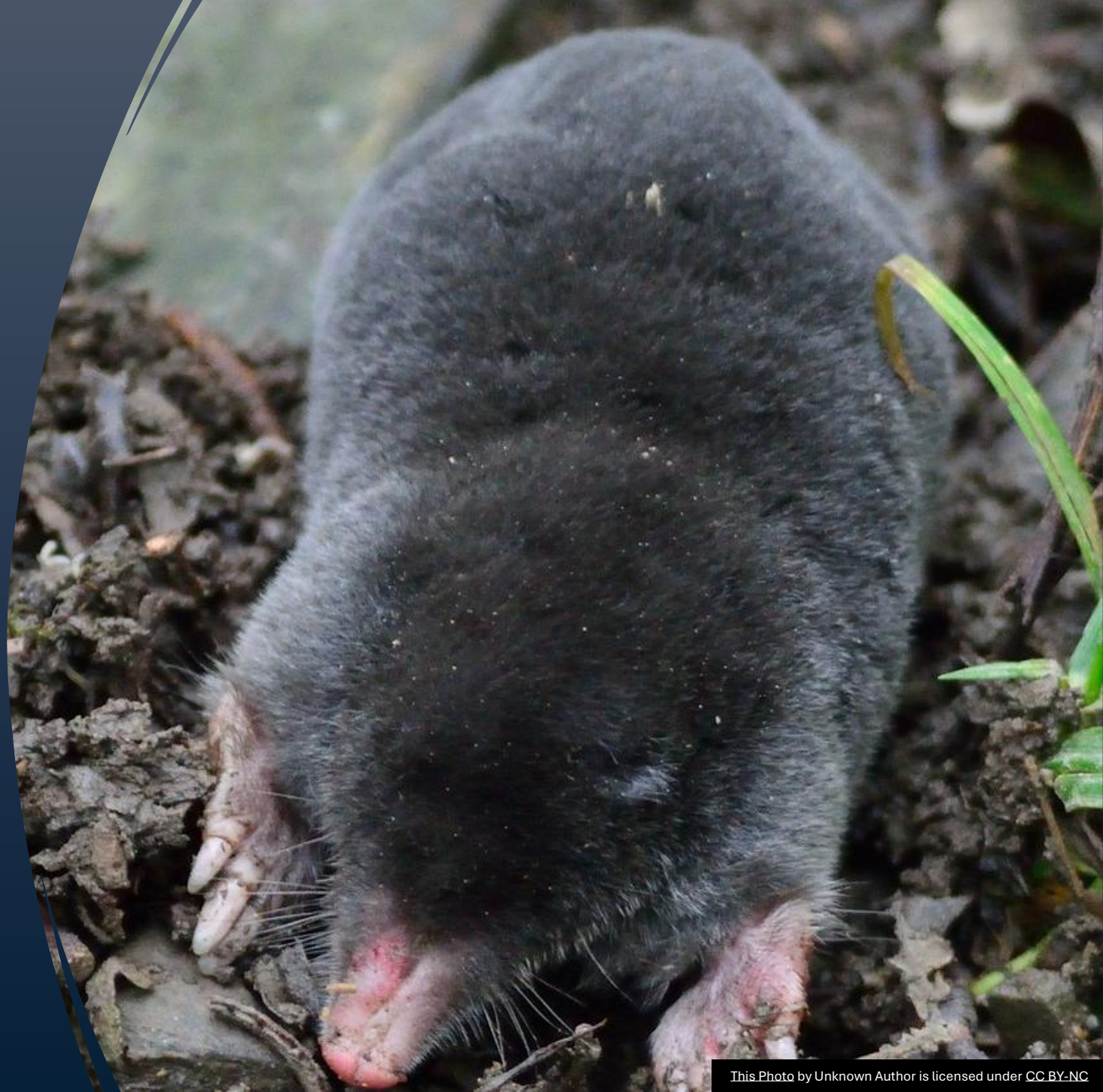


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Then he began to holler at her. “You just sprinkled the deer’s blood on me!!”, protested Mole. “No, my word is the truth!”, insisted Coyote. “You must move away from the main camp and stay by yourself.”

Mole had to do what Coyote demanded, so she packed up her belongings and moved away from their camp.



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Coyote quartered the deer and took it to the camp. After barbecuing it near the fire, he and his son ate all the cooked meat. But still Coyote was hungry.



“Go tell your mother that I want some berries.” he told his son. The boy did as his father requested, but Mole told the boy to tell his father to get his own berries.



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Coyote went to the storage cache to look for some berries, but they had been chewed and were scattered in the dirt. Coyote returned home empty handed.



“Go tell your mother that I want some lily roots to eat.” Coyote told his boy. But when the boy told this to Mole, she told him to tell his father to get them himself.



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Coyote also wanted some Indian carrots. Mole wasn't about to get them for him either.



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Coyote went to the storage cache again. All that he could find was chewed roots mixed in the dirt. “That wife of mine has done this to me.” Coyote muttered to himself.



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He searched for a club with which to beat his wife to death. Mole knew what Coyote was thinking, so she made her own plans. She hummed a song, and as she hummed Mole rose higher and higher in the air. Then a wind came and blew her away.



“Come back, come back!” pleaded Coyote, but Mole didn’t pay any attention to him. Coyote tried to follow Mole. When he realized that he wasn’t able to catch her, Coyote went back to the camp and layed down.



Coyote became hungry again. He and his son began to walk along the river looking for food. Soon they heard a rattling noise.



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Coyote knew that it was the people-killer who was approaching. “Stay here and keep still,” he told his young son. “that people-killer is a horrible person!”.

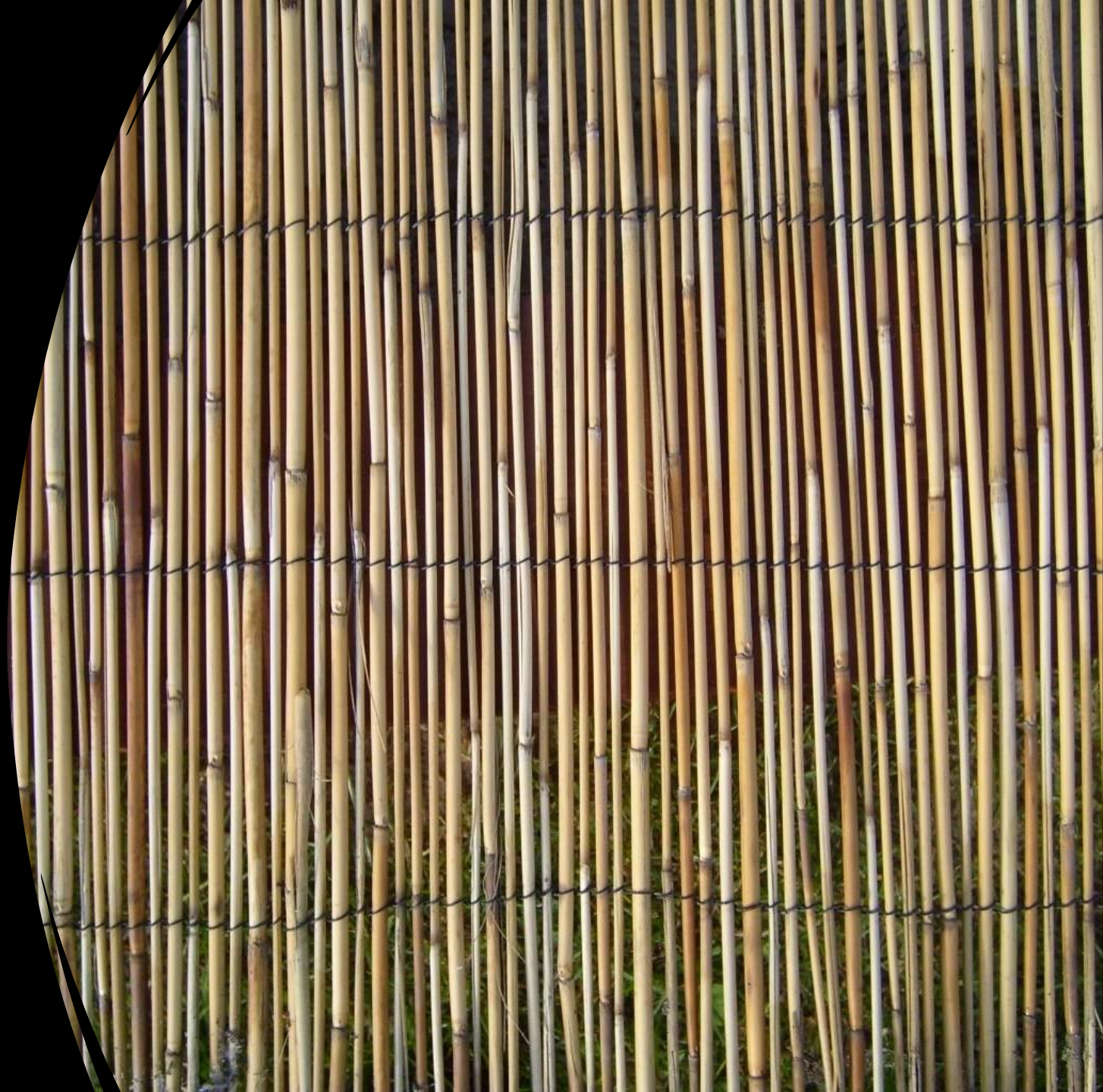
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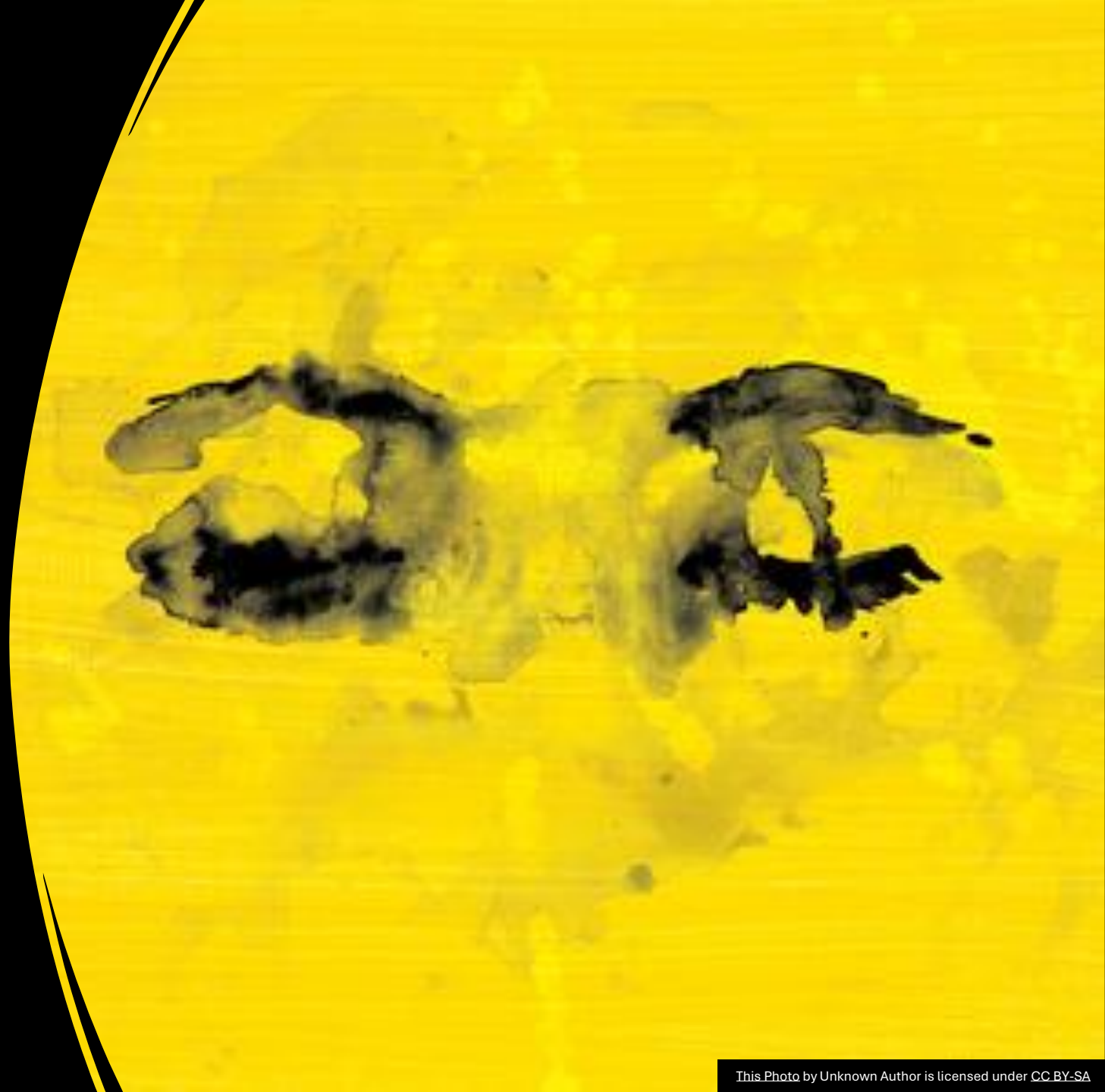
Coyote stood in the middle of the path and waited for the people-killer to reach him. They met face to face. “I have eaten all of the people west of here,” said the people-killer.

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Coyote looked the people-killer straight in the eye and said, “I have eaten all the people east of here. We will each vomit what we have eaten and that will prove who is telling the truth.” They placed a mat between them.



“You must close your eyes while you vomit and I will tell you when to open them”, explained Coyote. The people-killer closed his eyes and vomited a piece of human flesh.



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Coyote slapped his stomach and vomited a clump of an underwater plant. Quickly Coyote exchanged their piles of vomit so that it appeared that the people-killer had vomited the plant.



“Okay, let’s open our eyes and see who was telling the truth.” announced Coyote. “Look what is in front of you! Nothing but a pile of underwater plants, but in front of me there is a pile of human flesh.”



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“You, people-killer, will be something from the past. No longer will you eat people.”



Coyote and his son followed the river until they came to a place where a young girl was dancing on the opposite shore. They sat down and watched the girl dance, but soon Coyote became sleepy. So the girl transformed him into a rock. His son was also transformed into a rock.



“When people come to this land, this rock will be called Ska-Cheen”, the girl said. The rocks that are Coyote and his son can still be seen along the South Thompson River.

