

Géha Aids A Deserted Boy

Jeremiah Curtin

Native American

Easy
11 min read

In a cabin at the edge of a village lived a grandmother and her grandson. The grandmother was old and the grandson was young and they were so poor that they ate scraps given them by their neighbors.

Once, when a hunting party was starting off, the little boy followed it. The hunters traveled five days, then camped and built a bark hut.

The boy was too young to hunt; he went out with the men but never killed anything. They called him OTHWÉNSAWÉNHDE from the part of a deer they threw out for him to eat—"the small liver by the side of the large one."

When the hunters were ready to start for home, they agreed to leave the boy, not letting him know that they were going; they wanted to travel fast.

One day when he came back to the hut, the boy found only the pile of hair left from the skins they had dressed. The men had taken everything and gone. The child didn't know the way home.

That night he slept on the pile of hair; the next morning he found the chin bone of a deer and getting out the marrow ate it. When it was night again, he heard somebody coming; the door opened, and a man said, "Well, OTHWÉNSAWÉNHDE, you think you are going to die, but you are not. Get your knife and put it on the stump outside the door, and in the morning go and bring it in. You must hunt, to-morrow." The stranger, who was

GÉHA (Wind), went away.

The boy had an old basswood knife; he carried it out and put it on the stump. Early in the morning he went to the stump and there he found a new knife. He took his bow and arrow and knife and went into the woods. He saw a deer, ran after it, overtook it and killed it with his knife. Then he threw his bow and arrow away and afterward when hunting used his knife. He killed large game and had plenty of meat.

One night he heard somebody coming, then a man pushed open the door, and said, calling him by name, "I am here to tell you that NYAGWAIHE is coming to kill you. To-night put your knife on the stump outside, get it in the morning and go to the top of the tall elm tree at the end of the hut; hide in the branches and wait.

NYAGWAIHE will climb the tree and look over into the hut to see if you are there. When he is coming down backwards, stick your knife into a small white spot in his right hind foot; he will fall to the ground, dead. Then pile up wood around the body and burn it."

GÉHA went out.

The boy put his knife on the stump and in the morning the old knife was gone and a larger and longer knife was in its place. He picked up the knife and climbing the tree hid in the branches. Just at daybreak he heard a terrible roar, and right away NYAGWAIHE was climbing the tree. When he got to the top, he looked into the smoke-hole of the hut, and said, "There is a fire; the boy must be there," and he started down the tree.

The boy saw the white spot and stuck his knife into it; NYAGWAIHE fell to the ground, dead.

That night, just as the boy was going to sleep, he heard somebody coming. GÉHA opened the door, and said, "I came to tell you that those hunters who left you here are starving. Ten days from now they will come back to the hut. You must be kind to them. Don't feel proud or boast of your swiftness. You felt proud, that is why NYAGWAIHE came to destroy you. "Don't say that there is no one who can outrun you, When they come tell them to help themselves to the meat you have dried. When they are ready to go home, go with them; tell every man to take as much meat as he can carry. Put your knife on the stump."

GÉHA went away. The boy put his knife, which was made of basswood, on the stump. In the morning the knife was shorter and smaller.

During the next nine days the boy killed many deer, The tenth day he stayed in the hut, watching and listening. At midday the hunters came. When they saw how much; meat the boy had, they asked forgiveness. He told

them to eat as much meat as they wanted, then take as much home as each man could carry.

They took half of the meat. The boy packed up the other half, shook it till it was as light a pack as any one of the men was carrying, then started on behind them.

When they got back to the village, the boy went to his grandmother's house and threw down his pack. That minute it came to its natural size.

"Oh," cried his grandmother, "I am happy now. The hunters said you were lost in the woods. But you are back and have brought plenty of meat."

"Go, grandmother," said the boy, "and ask all the women to come and get as much meat as they can carry away."

The women came and carried away many loads of meat, but the meat in the house wasn't diminished. There seemed to be as much as before any was taken.

Now a chief in the East challenged the chief of the village to run a race; whichever side was beaten all the men on that side would lose their lives.

The chief called the people together to decide on a runner. The boy said, "I will run with the man you choose and you can decide which is the better runner."

The chief was pleased. He chose a man and the two stood apart. Other men also volunteered to run. The chief raised his hand, then dropped it, and the runners started, that minute the boy was out of sight, then off at the end of the opening a small dark object was seen. The other runner was only half way across the opening when the boy was back at the starting place. Then he began to boast that nobody could outrun him; he forgot GÉHA's warning.

There was a valley that went across the world; that valley was to be the race course. At the edge of the world was a rock that stood up like the trunk of a huge tree. The rock was white flint and it shone brightly; there was no other rock like it. The runner who reached the rock was to bring back a chip of it.

The runner for the challenging chief was tall and thin. At midday the sign was given and the runners started—the boy ran on the ground, his opponent ran in the air.

The boy used his full power and soon came back with a piece of the stone in his hand. After a long time the other runner came—the challenging chief and his men lost their heads.

The boy was proud and boastful. That night, just as he was falling asleep, he heard somebody coming. The door opened and a man said, “Come out, I want to talk to you.”

He went out.

“I challenge you to a foot race,” said the man. “You must wager the heads of all the people of the village, except yourself, against my head. I have no people. We will start at daylight and run till the sun reaches the middle of the Blue.”

“Very well,” said the boy.

The man disappeared. The boy told his grandmother what had happened and she started off to notify the people that their heads had been put up as a wager. While she was gone GÉHA came to the boy, and said, “I warned you not to boast and told you what would happen if you did. Now you must do your best or you will be beaten. You must help yourself. I am going home.”

The people assembled and the challenger came. Just as the sun rose, word was given and the runners started. As the challenger ran he threw up so much dirt that the boy was thrown back, and he fell. The people couldn't see the runner; but off in the distance was a NYAGWAIHE.

As the boy fell, GÉHA was there, and said, “Get up and start! Help yourself and I'll help you.”

The boy ran to the first knoll, looked but didn't see his opponent, reached the second knoll and saw him on a knoll far ahead, then saw him on the fourth knoll.

Now a Whirlwind took the boy up and, like a flash of lightning, put him at the runner's heels. He called out, “Hurry, or I'll overtake you!”

The runner used all his strength and soon was out of sight.

Again a Whirlwind picked up the boy and put him at the heels of his opponent. He shot twice and called out, “Do your best or I'll beat you!”

The runner couldn't get out of sight, he was losing strength.

Again a Whirlwind came and as it picked the boy up a voice said, out of the cloud, "This is the last time I'll help you."

Whirlwind put the boy down at his opponent's heels; the runner, now in his real form, the form of a NYAGWAIHE, said, "You have overtaken me and won the race."

Exactly at midday the boy cut off the Bear's head, and taking it started for home. When over three hills he was tired; he hung the head on the limb of a tree and taking the tongue went on. He went over two other hills and was tired; he hung the tongue on the limb of a tree and went on over other hills and knolls. When he reached home and told the people that he had killed his opponent, they said,

"We will go and see the body."

"You'll find it over the tenth hill. I tried to bring back the head, but seven hills from here I was tired and I hung it on the limb of a tree. I took the tongue, but when I came to the fifth hill I was tired and I hung the tongue on the limb of a tree."

It took a long time for the people to get to the first hill. When they had traveled five Summers and five Winters, they came to a hill. On the top of the hill was a tree, and on the tree was the tongue of the NYAGWAIHE. The ground around the tree was trampled down; thousands of wild beasts had been there and tried to get the tongue, the men looked at it and went on.

When they had traveled two more Summers and two more Winters they came to the seventh hill and found a skull, all that was left of the head. The ground around the tree was trampled down: thousands of wild beasts had been there and tried to get the head.

They traveled three Summers and three Winters, then reached the tenth hill. For a great distance around the ground had been made bare and hard by the trampling of wild beasts.

The place where NYAGWAIHE fell had become a deer-lick, not a bone or a trace of the body was left.

The men were ten years going home. The boy aided by GÉHA had made the journey between sunrise and midday.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com