



# *Juan Half-Bear: Part 1*

Elizabeth Willis De Huff  
Native Americannorth American

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*Intermediate*  
*3 min read*

I am going to tell you something: many, many years ago, an Indian went out hunting in the mountains and lost his way. For days he wandered around among the trees and at night slept on the ground, until he grew very tired, cold and hungry. Finally one evening he saw smoke. He ran swiftly over to the place whence the smoke came, and there he found two bears cooking their evening meal.

“I am lost, Mr. Bear,” said the man, “and I am starving to death. Please give me food and shelter for the night?”

“You are welcome to our home and board, Mr. Man,” replied Mr. Bear; and Mrs. Bear immediately gave him some of their freshly cooked supper.

All winter the bears kept the man in their cavehouse and shared their food with him. When spring came the man said, “I am going back home now. What can I do to repay you for all of your kindness to me?” Mr. Bear replied, “You can plant a field of corn for our food next winter when you go back to the Indian village.” And the man went back to the village and planted the field of corn.

In the fall when the corn was ripe for gathering, the man said to the Indians in the village, “I am going up into the mountains to hunt today. Tomorrow I shall bring two bears to my corn field. All of you form a circle around the field and catch them when they come.”

So the man set out for the bears’ house in the mountains. When he reached there, he found two baby bear cubs that had come since he had gone away. “All the better,” he thought, “now we shall have four bears instead of

two to eat this winter.”

He spent the night with the bears. Early the next morning he said to them, “Let us go down to the corn field today, for it is ready to be gathered.”

The bears were greatly pleased; so Father Bear, Mother Bear and the two cub Bears walked along happily behind the man. They had scarcely gone into the corn field when they heard a loud hunter’s yell, and Indians rushed upon them from all sides with bows and arrows and tomahawks. Father Bear was killed; but Mother Bear struck the man who had deceived them with a great blow of her paw. She tore open his chest, snatched out his heart and she and the baby bears ran safely away.

When they reached their cave-home in the mountains there was no one to find food for the family, so Mrs. Bear took the man’s heart and changed it into a boy that was half-man and half-bear and named him Juan Half-Bear.

“Now,” said Mrs. Bear to Juan, “you have the virtues of the man without his vices and also the good traits of the bear. I will teach you to hunt; and after you have provided us with food enough to atone for the trouble your wicked heart caused us, you shall be free to go wherever you please.”

So Juan helped the bears for many years until he grew into young manhood and then he went away to seek his fortune.

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