



Juan Half-Bear: Part 2

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Native Americannorth American

Intermediate
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I am going to tell you something: once upon a time an Indian man and woman lived near the village of Kotyete. They had a good home, cattle, sheep, corn fields, chickens, skins and blankets; but they had no children. They were growing old. Every day they prayed to the Great Spirit to send them a son, so that they might have someone to leave all of their good things to when they passed away to the Great Spirit's home. They went to all of the sacred dances and always prayed for a son.

There also lived near Kotyete a young man, who was half boy and half bear. It was Juan Half-Bear; but none of the Indians had ever seen him, for he hid away in the mountains. One day when the man and woman were in the village dancing in a sacred dance, this half-boy and half-bear went to their house. He wanted to live among the Indians; so he crawled into an open window to look around and see how they lived, so that he might do likewise. But while he was in there he heard the man and woman coming home, so he hid himself under a pile of blankets. The old people knelt down beside that same pile of blankets to say their daily prayer for a son.

Juan Half-Bear

“Great Spirit, we have tried to live at peace with all of our brothers; we have worshipped you in dance and in song; please send us a son to take care of and keep all of the good things you have given us!”

Then as they were getting up, the old woman saw the boy under the blankets. She was frightened and called to her husband to “Look!”

“Do not be afraid,” said the boy, “I am Juan Half-Bear. I have come to be your son. I have a home with many skins in it. Let the old man come with me and I will show them to him; and then if he is pleased with me, I shall come to live with you and be that son for whom you have been praying.”

So the old man went with Juan Half-Bear to his home in the mountains. In the first room that they entered there was nothing; but in the next room there were many skins just as Juan had said. Juan seemed to be good and capable, so the old man took him back home with him.

“Wife,” said he, “I like Juan Half-Bear. He seems a good boy and thrifty, for he has many skins; so I have brought him home with me to be our son.”

Many days after that, all of the young Indian men of the village, including Juan Half-Bear, went out on a hunt to get meat for food and skins for clothing and beds. They camped up in the mountains and every day a young man was left in camp, while the others hunted, to cook for the hunters and to watch the game that had been killed.

Each day for four days the young man who was left in camp mysteriously fell asleep while their food was cooking; and something, that made no noise and left no tracks, came and stole all of the food and all of the game that had been killed. Each day the young men promised and determined not to go to sleep; but each day something made them go to sleep against their will.

On the Fifth day Juan Half-Bear’s turn came to stay in camp. “I shall not go to sleep,” he said “and I shall find out what this is stealing all of our things.”

So Juan set to work to build a fire and cook some deer meat. Suddenly he felt himself growing very sleepy on his man’s side. He grew so sleepy that he had to lie down and let his man’s side go to sleep; but his bear’s eye stayed wide awake.

Very soon a witch-giant came out of the woods and took away all of the meat and the deer that had been killed. Juan Half-Bear jumped up and followed him. The giant went into a big cave. The floor of the cave was covered

with prickly cactuses. The needles on the cactuses stuck Juan's man-leg so bad that he could not stand the pain in that leg; but they could not hurt his hairy bear-leg, so Juan hopped on his bear-leg and followed the giant through the cactuses. When the giant saw Juan following him he laughed "Ha, Ha!" in a loud terrible voice; for he thought that he could soon put an end to Juan. Then the giant rolled a stone away from the door and went into another room. He thundered to Juan, "Now follow me in here if you dare!" Juan did dare to follow him; but just as he entered the door two mountain lions jumped at him. Juan turned his bear side to the lions and killed them both.

The giant went into another cave room. Juan went in, too. He was determined to catch and kill that giant and take back the Indians' deer from him. Two more mountain lions sprang at Juan; but Juan was too quick for them and he killed them, also. Then he grabbed the giant and killed him in a big bear hug.

In that last room Juan found many fine skins and all the deer that the witch giant had stolen. He took all the things that he found back to camp with him.

When the hunters returned he had delicious roasted meat ready for them. He told them about the witch-giant and shared with them all the things he had brought from the cave.

So when the hunters returned home, the Indians had a big buffalo and deer dance; and they made Juan Half-Bear their great War-Chief.

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