

Juanita, Marianita, The Cat, and the Bear

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Native American north American

Intermediate
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O-way-way-ham-by-yoh, the meaning of which you already know, an Indian man and woman had two daughters, Juanita and Marianita. Juanita was older than Marianita, so whenever their father and mother went to a fiesta – that is, a kind of picnic and dance – they always took Juanita and left Marianita at home with the cat.

One day the father and mother and Juanita went to fiesta to stay all day and all night. That afternoon when Marianita was cutting up meat to make a stew for her supper, the cat sat down beside her and begged for some of the meat. She gave him some; then she got him some water; she stroked his fur; and she did all sorts of nice things for him.

That evening when it began to grow dark Marianita was afraid; for there was no one in the house with her, you know, but the cat.

“Don’t be afraid,” said the cat, “You fasten the door and the windows tight and I will take care of you.”

So Marianita locked the door and fastened the windows.

That night a bear came to the door and knocked. The cat peeped out through a crack to see who was knocking.

He saw the bear – for cats can see at night – so he called out: “I am sorry we cannot open the door for you, Bear-man, but we are busy making a fire.”

The bear waited a while and then knocked again. But the cat said, “We are making bread now, so we cannot open the door.”

The bear waited and knocked a third time. “Open the door. I have presents for you.” This time the cat called, “I am sorry but we are baking the bread and cannot open the door.”

The bear grew tired of waiting. He tried to break the door down but it was too strong so he started away. Just then the cat opened the door and jumped out upon the bear’s back. It startled the bear so, that he dropped the bundle of presents. The bundle fell open and the most beautiful jewelry and dresses and fine things that Marianita had ever seen fell out.

The bear was so frightened that he ran away and Marianita went out and gathered up all of the beautiful things. She dressed the cat up in a pretty little dress and some beaded shoes, that just fitted him. Then she dressed herself in a new dress and put on all of the jewels.

When the father, mother and Juanita came home next morning, the cat ran out to meet them. They were surprised to see his dress and shoes and wondered what had happened. He told them, but they could not understand him. He told them again and they still did not understand, so they went into the house in a hurry to see what the cat meant. They were so pleased to see Marianita looking so fine that they hugged her up tight.

“Where did you get these lovely things?” And Marianita told them all about the bear.

The next time the Indians had a fiesta, Juanita let Marianita go with their father and mother. She wanted to stay at home, so that the bear could bring her some pretty things.

That afternoon, when Juanita was cutting up meat for her stew, the cat sat beside her and begged for some of the meat; but Juanita would not give him any. Instead she struck at the cat with her knife and treated him mean.

The cat climbed up on the window and went to sleep. When it grew dark and Juanita began to feel afraid at being all alone, the cat pretended to still be asleep. He did not say anything to her about the door and windows

and Juanita did not think to fasten them.

That night when the bear came to knock on the door, he found the door unlocked, so he walked right into the house. Juanita thought he had come to bring her some fine clothes, so she said, "Good-evening, Bear-man, won't you have a seat?" and the bear sat down beside her.

"What makes your feet so big, Bear-man?"

"To walk the faster, little one."

"Well, what makes your nose so long?"

"To scent the keener, little girl."

"And what makes your ears so big?"

"To hear the better, my dear."

"What makes your eyes so bright?"

"To see the farther."

"What makes your teeth so long?"

"To eat you up."

And the bear ran away with Juanita to eat her up.

But when the cat saw how Marianita grieved for her sister, he ran to the Bear's den; jumped on the back of the Bear's head; scratched out his eyes and took Juanita back home again.

Author Note: San Juan Pueblo

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