



Pah-Tay and the Wind-Witch

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Pah-tay was a little Indian boy who lived long, long, long ago. One night when he was going to bed on his pile of pretty red and yellow blankets, he said to his mother:

“Ye-ah, it is going to snow tomorrow. I will go hunting and kill you some rabbits. Please put my quiver of arrows, my new bow that Tay-tay made me, and some lunch by the door before you go to bed; for I shall leave early in the morning.”

Just like all other mothers, Pah-tay’s mother did as he asked her. She put his new bow and arrows against the door-post. She wrapped up some hard baked bread in some corn husks for his lunch. She put this lunch beside the bow and arrows; and right on top of it she placed a little bag made of buckskin filled with corn meal. Ye-ah wanted Pah-tay to sprinkle a little sacred meal over all the water he passed, so that the Rain-God would give him luck and bring him safely home again.

Next morning when Ye-ah awoke, the little bed on the floor next to her blanket-bed was empty. She looked over by the door and the things she had placed there were gone. She got up quickly and looked out of the little peep-hole window; it was snowing and the big round red sun was hidden. Pah-tay had already gone out over the prairie to hunt rabbits. Quickly Ye-ah went into the little room where outsiders were never allowed to go, and took some sacred corn meal out of a jar. She dropped the meal into the center of a round pile of sacred rocks; so that the good spirits would take care of her little boy out in the snow.

For many hours Pah-tay wandered about in the snow storm killing rabbits. He killed so many that they were hanging thick all around his belt. It had been growing dark and the snow had gotten so deep that it was difficult to walk through it; but little Pah-tay had been so interested in his rabbits, that he did not notice either the darkness or the snow until he had used his last arrow.

Then he was ready to go home; but when he turned around all parts of the country, being covered with snow, looked just alike and he did not know which way to go. He went up on top of a little hill to look for a light. He knew that if he saw a light it would come from a house.

Sure enough he saw a light. He went to the light, and climbed the ladder he found beside the house. Then he called down through the open door, "Does a friend live here?"

"Yes, a friend lives here, come down!"

Pah-tay climbed down the inside ladder to the floor, and an old woman roughly caught his arm.

"I am glad you have come for I eat little children," she said, "and I am starving for raw meat."

Poor Pah-tay began to tremble. He tried to pull his arm away from the old witch, for that is what the old woman was, but she held him tight.

"Aha, what is this you have here! Rabbits!" and the old witch began to smack her lips.

"I shall eat these rabbits first and then I will eat you."

She pushed Pah-tay down into the corner and began to skin the rabbits. She ate the rabbits one by one with her sharp teeth. Pah-tay tried to slip by her to run away; but she pushed him back with her bloody hands. He watched her eat all of the big pile of rabbits but two, and he shivered to think how soon she would eat him.

“It is warm down here. I would like to go up and sit on the roof,” he said.

“No,” replied the witch, “I will not give you a chance to get away.”

“But if I am too warm, I will not taste good.”

“That is true; but you will taste better than no boy at all.”

There was only one more rabbit!

“You tie all of your belts together,” suggested Pah-tay, “to make a strong rope, and then tie one end to my leg and hold the other end while I go up on the roof.”

The old witch agreed, so she made a rope of all of her belts. She tied one end to Pah-tay’s leg and he climbed up the ladder. As soon as he was up, he untied the rope from his leg and tied it to the ladder. Then he whispered: “Little fairy in the ladder, whenever the old witch calls me, please answer ‘here I am’”. And then he climbed quickly and quietly down the outside ladder and ran up on the hill to look for another light. He saw one and ran to it.

In the doorway of the house, Pah-tay found two men singing and beating a drum.

“Please, let me in. An old witch is trying to eat me up and I want to hide.”

The men let him in, and inside some women were grinding corn on big stones. Pah-tay hid behind one of the stones.

All the while the witch was eating the last rabbit, she kept jerking the rope and calling, “Are you there, little boy?” And each time the little fairy in the ladder answered, “Here I am.”

But the last time she jerked, the rope came untied. The witch looked up and did not see Pah-tay. “He has run away, but I’ll catch him,” and she showed her sharp teeth.

She turned around and around and changed herself into the north wind. Then she went whistling after Pah-

tay. She followed him to the house where the men were singing. There she changed herself back from the wind to an old woman.

“Where is that little boy who came here a few minutes ago? I want him,” she wheezed.

“Go in,” replied the men, “and if you find him, he is yours.”

The old witch went in and looked in all of the dark corners. When Pah-tay saw her coming towards the stone where he was hiding, he ran outside again. He saw another light and ran to it. This light was in a kiva and the medicine men were dancing inside with their rattles. Down into the kiva climbed Pah-tay. He jumped into a hole in the big rattle of one of the medicine men. He bumped around in the rattle with a funny noise; but the medicine men kept on singing and dancing.

As soon as the old witch found that Pah-tay had left the house where the women were grinding meal, she whirled around and changed herself again into the north wind and followed him. She went down into the kiva to get him; for she had changed into an old woman again. But the sound of the rattles confused her. She tried to climb the ladder to get out again, but before she reached the top the rhythm made her fall back dead.

And Pah-tay went back home to Ye-ah.

Note: San Juan Pueblo

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