



The Fate of the Boy Witch

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Easy
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Once upon a time – many, many years ago, – two Indian boys were in love with the same girl, Man-nah. One of the boys, Tee-yoh, had no mother and father. He lived with his grandmother outside of the village and they were very poor. The other boy, Poo-wah-ka, was a boy witch; but, as he looked just like any other Indian boy, nobody knew that he was a witch. He lived in the village.

Every day for many days Poo-wah-ka went to Man-nah’s house to talk to her, but Man-nah did not like him so she would not answer him. One day when Man-nah was grinding corn beside her peep-hole window, Tee-yoh came to the window and spoke to her. Man-nah liked Tee-yoh so she talked to him. So for many days Tee-yoh came to Man-nah’s house to see her.

This made Poo-wah-ka jealous, so one day he invited Tee-yoh to go hunting with him; and after they had been hunting for a while Poo-wah-ka said:

“I tell you what we can do, Tee-yoh. We can change ourselves into coyotes. The the rabbits will not hide from us and we can kill lots of them. I will show you how to become a coyote.”

Then Poo-wah-ka took a hoop that he had been secretly carrying and jumped over it. Immediately he changed into a coyote. He handed the hoop to Tee-yoh, and as Tee-yoh jumped over it he changed into a coyote too.

Then they ran off in different direction to hunt rabbits.

Tee-yoh killed so many rabbits that he could not carry them all, so he left them in a pile beside a rock while he looked for Poo-wah-ka. He was ready to change back to a boy and go home. But he could not find Poo-wah-ka, for Poo-wah-ka had been hiding and watching him. He had not killed any rabbits. As soon as Tee-yoh left his pile of rabbits, Poo-wah-ka slipped out from his hiding place and took the rabbits. Then he jumped over the hoop, changed himself back into a boy and ran home laughing to himself, "Now I shall have Man-noh for my girl, I guess."

He left poor Tee-yoh out in the fields without any way to change back into a boy. Tee-yoh tried to go back into the village to find Poo-wah-ka but the dogs chased him out. His grandmother was worried about him when he failed to come home, so she went to ask Poo-wah-ka what had become of him.

"I do not know where he is," replied Poo-wah-ka. "He is somewhere in the fields still hunting."

For days and days Tee-yoh searched for Poo-wah-ka and for the hoop. He could not eat raw meat like real coyotes, and he was afraid to roast the meat in case the Indians might see the smoke of his fire and shoot him. He dared not go back to the village for fear of the dogs, so he was starving to death. Every night he slept in the middle of a grass patch, and one morning he was so weak for want of food that he could not get up. Tee-yoh was dying.

The eagles up in the heavens, who see and know everything, saw Tee-yoh in his distress. They knew what had happened, so they sent their swiftest eagle down to him. Tee-yoh heard a thunderous noise, like a snare drum nearby. He looked up quickly and saw the eagle swoop down beside him. "Do not be afraid. I have come to help you, Tee-yoh. You changed yourself into a coyote because you believed in Poo-wah-ka and thought he was your friend. Here is a little corn meal mush to strengthen you. Eat it quickly, for we must hurry. Right now Poo-wah-ka is talking to Man-nah. He has told your grandmother that he does not know where you are, and she is sick with grief. Get on my back, the eagles are waiting for us."

Tee-yoh climbed on the eagle's back and he circled around and around, higher and higher with him, until they reached the eagles' village up in the heavens. Up there the eagle messenger took him into the chief's house.

When Tee-yoh saw the eagle men and eagle women and the eagle boys and eagle girls all walking around without their eagle feather coats – for the eagles took off their feathered coats and hung them up on the wall when they were in their houses – he was frightened.

“Do not be afraid, Tee-yoh. You are welcome to our village and we have brought you here to help you,” said Eagle-Chief.

The eagle-messenger brought in hot water and put Tee-yoh into a big jar full of it. Then Eagle-Chief took a dried herb shaped like a hook and twisted it around in the coyote skin on top of Tee-yoh’s head. He pulled on the hook and pulled all of the coyote skin off, so that Tee-yoh was a boy once more.

The eagles washed him clean and gave him fine new clothes of buckskin and eagle feathers. The eagle girls washed and combed his hair; and then they all had a big feast of deer’s meat.

There were white mountains, lovely trees, plenty of deer and all sorts of good things around the eagle village. The feast lasted for four days. Tee-yoh had a fine time and grew strong and well.

Then the eagle chief told him it was time for him to go home. They gave him a deer which they had killed for him, and a tiny buckskin bag of herb-medicine.

“When you reach home, Tee-yoh,” said the Eagle-Chief, “Poo-wah-ka will be the first person to come to see you. Do not tell him where you have been; but invite him to come to eat deer’s meat with you. Then when he comes to the feast put this medicine on his meat.”

So the eagle who had brought Tee-yoh up into the heavens took him, with his deer, on his back and flew down to the edge of the Indian village. There he left Tee-yoh.

Tee-yoh hurried to his grandmother’s house and found her lying on her blankets sick from grief; but she was so glad to see her grandson that she soon grew better.

Sure enough, just as Eagle-Chief had told him, Poo-wah-ka was the first person to come to see him. He was surprised to see Tee-yoh for he thought that he was still a coyote if he were not already dead.

“Where have you been, Tee-yoh? We have been looking for you,” said Poo-wah-ka, deceitfully.

“Oh, I have just been hunting deer,” replied Tee-yoh, “I have a fine deer. Come over to my feast tomorrow.”

Next day when Poo-wah-ka came to the feast, Tee-yoh did as Eagle-Chief had told him and put the medicine on his meat; and when Poo-wah-ka ate the meat he turned into a coyote. He began eating like an animal and lapping up water with his tongue. When he did Tee-yoh picked up a stick and drove him outside. The dogs in the village saw him and chased him away into the fields. He could never come back again.

Some time after that Tee-yoh and Man-nah were married and lived happily ever after.

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