



Why the Deer Has No Gall

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Native AmericanNorth American

Easy
5 min read

Bright and early the next morning the children were playing on the bank of “The River That Scolds the Other,” when Fine Bow said:

“Let us find a Deer’s foot, and the foot of an Antelope and look at them, for to-night grandfather will tell us why the Deer has the dew-claws, and why the Antelope has none.”

“Yes, and let us ask mother if the Deer has no gall on its liver. Maybe she can show both the liver of a Deer and that of an Antelope; then we can see for ourselves,” said Blue-bird.

So they began to look about where the hides had been grained for tanning; and sure enough, there were the feet of both the antelope and the deer. On the deer’s feet, or legs, they found the dew-claws, but on the antelope there were none. This made them all anxious to know why these animals, so nearly alike, should differ in this way.

Bluebird’s mother passed the children on her way to the river for water, and the little girl asked: “Say, mother, does the Deer have gall on his liver?”

“No, my child, but the Antelope does; and your grandfather will tell you why if you ask him.”

That night in the lodge War Eagle placed before his grandchildren the leg of a deer and the leg of an antelope, as well as the liver of a deer and the liver of an antelope.

“See for yourselves that this thing is true, before I tell you why it is so, and how it happened.”

“We see,” they replied, “and to-day we found that these strange things are true, but we don’t know why, grandfather.”

“Of course you don’t know why. Nobody knows that until he is told, and now I shall tell you, so you will always know, and tell your children, that they, too, may know.

“It was long, long ago, of course. All these things happened long ago when the world was young, as you are now. It was on a summer morning, and the Deer was travelling across the plains country to reach the mountains on the far-off side, where he had relatives. He grew thirsty, for it was very warm, and stopped to drink from a water-hole on the plains. When he had finished drinking he looked up, and there was his own cousin, the Antelope, drinking near him.

“‘Good morning, cousin,’ said the Deer. ‘It is a warm morning and water tastes good, doesn’t it?’

“‘Yes,’ replied the Antelope, ‘it is warm to-day, but I can beat you running, just the same.’

“‘Ha-ha!’ laughed the Deer — ‘you beat me running? Why, you can’t run half as fast as I can, but if you want to run a race let us bet something. What shall it be?’

“‘I will bet you my gall-sack,’ replied the Antelope.

“‘Good,’ said the Deer, ‘but let us run toward that range of mountains, for I am going that way, anyhow, to see my relations.’

“‘All right,’ said the Antelope. ‘All ready, and here we go.’

“Away they ran toward the far-off range. All the way the Antelope was far ahead of the Deer; and just at the foot of the mountains he stopped to wait for him to catch up.

“Both were out of breath from running, but both declared they had done their best, and the Deer, being beaten, gave the Antelope his sack of gall.

“‘This ground is too flat for me,’ said the Deer. ‘Come up the hillside where the gulches cut the country, and rocks are in our way, and I will show you how to run. I can’t run on flat ground. It’s too easy for me.’

“‘All right,’ replied the Antelope, ‘I will run another race with you on your own ground, and I think I can beat you there, too.’

“Together they climbed the hill until they reached a rough country, when the Deer said:

“‘This is my kind of country. Let us run a race here. Whoever gets ahead and stays there, must keep on running until the other calls on him to stop.’

“‘That suits me,’ replied the Antelope, ‘but what shall we bet this time? I don’t want to waste my breath for nothing. I’ll tell you — let us bet our dew-claws.’

“‘Good. I’ll bet you my dew-claws against your own, that I can beat you again. Are you all ready? — Go!’

“Away they went over logs, over stones and across great gulches that cut the hills in two. On and on they ran, with the Deer far ahead of the Antelope. Both were getting tired, when the Antelope called:

“‘Hi, there — you! Stop, you can beat me. I give up.’

“So the Deer stopped and waited until the Antelope came up to him, and they both laughed over the fun, but the Antelope had to give the Deer his dew-claws, and now he goes without himself. The Deer wears dew-claws and always will, because of that race, but on his liver there is no gall, while the Antelope carries a gallsack like the other animals with cloven hoofs.

“That is all of that story, but it is too late to tell you another to-night. If you will come to-morrow evening, I will tell you of some trouble that Old-man got into once. He deserved it, for he was wicked, as you shall see. Ho!”

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