

Why the Dove is Timid

From *The Book of Nature Myths* by Florence Holbrooke

A spirit called the manito always watches over the Indians. He is glad when they are brave, but if they are cowardly, he is angry. One day when the manito was walking under the pine-trees, he heard a cry of terror in the forest.

“What is that?” said he. “Can it be that any of my Indian children are afraid?”

As he stood listening, an Indian boy came running from the thicket, crying in fear.

“What are you afraid of?” asked the manito.

“My mother told me to go into the forest with my bow and arrows and shoot some animal for food,” said the boy.

“That is what all Indian boys must do,” said the manito. “Why do you not do as she said?”

“Oh, the great bear is in the forest, and I am afraid of him!”

“Afraid of Hoots?” asked the manito. “An Indian boy must never be afraid.”

“But Hoots will eat me, I know he will,” cried the boy. “Boo-hoo, boo-hoo!”

“A boy must be brave,” said the manito, “and I will not have a coward among my Indians. You are too timid ever to be a warrior, and so you shall be a bird. Whenever Indian boys look at you, they will say, ‘There is the boy who was afraid of Hoots.’”

The boy’s cloak of deerskin fell off, and feathers came out all over his body. His feet were no longer like a boy’s feet, they were like the feet of a bird. His bow and arrows fell upon the grass, for he had no longer any hands with which to hold them. He tried to call to his mother, but the only sound he could make was “Hoo, hoo!”

“Now you are a dove,” said the manito, “and a dove you shall be as long as you live. You shall always be known as the most timid of birds.”

Again the dove that had once been a boy tried to call, but he only said, “Hoo, hoo!”

“That is the only sound you will ever make,” said the manito, “and when the other boys hear it, they will say, ‘Listen! He was afraid of Hoots, the bear, and that is why he says Hoo, hoo!’”

1. The author says that if the Indians are cowardly, then the spirit manito is angry. How does the author prove this point in the text?

2. What details does the author provide to show that the boy has been turned into a dove?

ANSWERS

1. Manito turns the Indian boy into a bird because he is too afraid to go into the woods to kill an animal for food.

2. The boy's cloak of deerskin fell off, and feathers came out all over his body. His feet were no longer like a boy's feet, they were like the feet of a bird. His bow and arrows fell upon the grass, for he had no longer any hands with which to hold them. He tried to call to his mother, but the only sound he could make was "Hoo, hoo!"