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Title:

Fox and wolf: a Native-American folk tale

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Wolf was smart, but Fox was smarter. They lived in the same deep forest and chased the same animals for food. Fox and Wolf would nod as they passed each other on the animal paths but they stayed out of each other's hunting grounds. Fox and Wolf were good neighbors but not good friends.

One winter the cold moved in like an enemy. Wind beat against the tree trunks, and snow swirled around the bare branches.

It was hard for Fox and Wolf to walk to their hunting grounds as the animal paths were filled with deep snow. The cold wind stung their eyes and made their noses ache. Fox and Wolf were hungry; all their usual food slept in the earth, warm and snug in mouse holes or chipmunk nests.

One dark, cold day Fox saw a Mohawk Indian man trudging through the forest pulling a sled behind him. The sled held two long strings of fish.

Fox licked his chops, thinking of those plump, tasty fish. How good they would be to eat! How good it would feel to sleep with a full belly tonight, when the sun pulled up her night blanket against the cold, and the forest filled with icy darkness. Fox hid behind a tree and thought and thought.

Finally he said to himself, "I know how to get those fish, every last one of them."

Fox ran ahead of the man and found a tree in his path. Fox leaned against the trunk. "My leg! My leg!" he cried. "I've broken my leg!"

The man hurried to the tree, pulling his sled behind him.

"I've broken my leg," Fox cried. "Help me, brother."

"A fox with a broken leg makes a very poor fox," the man said. "He makes a better fur hat. I will take you home and make a warm fur hat out of you."

The man placed the whimpering fox on the sled with the fish. He pushed through the windy forest for home, his snow shoes squeaking over the dry, feather-light snow. Fox lay on the sled, waiting.

At the best moment for escape, Fox grabbed one string of fish and jumped off the sled. "Nothing tastes better than a string of fish on a cold winter's day," he yipped to the man. "You won't get that fur hat today!"

Fox raced into the deepest part of the forest. He sat by a tree and began to feast on his fish. Wolf came by.

"Brother," Wolf said, "nothing tastes better than a string of fish on a cold winter's day. Perhaps you could give me some of your fish."

"No," replied Fox, chomping on a fish. "I need all my fish today, but I'll tell you how you can get some fish of your own."

Soon, Wolf lay against a tree, howling. "My leg! My leg!" he cried. "Help me."

The Mohawk man rushed through the forest toward Wolf, his second string of fish bumping behind him on the sled.

"I've broken my leg," Wolf howled. "Help me, brother."

"I've been tricked once today," the Mohawk said angrily. "I won't be tricked again."

Fox watched from behind a tree as the man knelt to tie Wolf's legs with a grapevine rope. At the best moment, Fox dashed out and grabbed the second string of fish. He ran for the safety of the woods as fast as he could.

"Nothing tastes better than a second string of fish on a cold day," Fox called behind him. "No fish or fox-fur hat for the likes of you two today!"

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