

Bluejay and Lizard and the Grizzly-Bears

Achomawi

Some Grizzly-Bears lived in a sweat-house near where Blue jay and Lizard lived. These latter had all kinds of food stored in bags of tule. The Grizzly-Bears had only acorns, and used to have to go to the other house to get salmon and meat. A Grizzly-Bear went over at sundown and sat down, saying, "I was sent over for scraps;" then Blue jay would say, "All right, get out some salmon," and Lizard would give Grizzly-Bear a large pile of it. When he got back home, the others would say, "They always give us a lot." In the morning another Grizzly went, and came back with a huge basket of pine-nuts; and in the evening then another would go, to get a lot of sunflower-seeds. In this way Blue jay and Lizard gave away all the food they had, and began to get hungry. Lizard, however, had been afraid that this would happen, so he had hidden ten salmon under his pillow while Blue jay had gone after wood one day. When all the rest of the food was gone, Lizard produced this reserve supply, and the two lived on this for a time. The Grizzly-Bears had saved much of the food they had begged, and feasted while the others were starving. The Grizzly-Bears hoped the others would die.

Blue jay soon got very weak, but Lizard was still able to get about. One day Lizard covered up the coals with ashes in their house, closed the smoke-hole, and, taking his knife, crept over to the house where the Grizzly-Bears were, all asleep. Lizard looked in and saw all the food they had there in storage. Then he went into the house, picked out the largest Grizzly-Bear, crawled into his anus, and cut out his heart. He brought the heart out, then skinned the body of the bear, the others meanwhile sleeping on. Lizard baked the liver quickly in the ashes, and ate it, then, leaning a pole up against the door, he walked on this, so that the Grizzly-Bears could not see his tracks. He took all the Grizzly-Bear meat home with him, and one basket of acorns. He found Blue jay almost dead; but he cooked some meat, and gave him some, and, after getting a little stronger, he was able to eat a great deal; and the two ate nearly all night.

In the morning the Grizzly-Bears woke up, and missed one of their number, but thought he had merely gone out of the house for a time. So they were not worried, but built a fire and sweated. Lizard and Blue jay kept quiet in their house, and did not move out. Every night Lizard did the same thing, killing one of the Bears until he had killed four of them,--two on each side of the door as they slept. The Grizzly-Bears did not suspect what the trouble was, for they thought both Lizard and Blue jay were dead. Thus Lizard and Blue jay lived through the winter.