

Honeyed Words Can't Sweeten Evil

Big Blue Heron was standing in the marsh looking at his reflection in the water. He raised his black-crested head to listen.

Two little White Weasels had come along to the river. They were mother and son. When they saw Blue Heron, they stopped to look.

'What a beautiful big bird-person!' said the son.

'He is called Blue Heron. He carries his head high!'

'Yes, Mother, he is tall as a tree. Were I so tall, I could carry you across this swift river.'

Blue Heron was pleased to hear himself so praised. He liked to hear other say that he was big.

He bent down low and spoke to the two. 'I will help you go across. Come down to where you see that old tree lying in the stream. I will lie down in the water at the end and put my bill deep into the bank on the other side. You two run across the tree. Then use my body as a bridge and you will get to the other side.'

They all went to the old tree lying in the water. Blue Heron lay down in the water at the end and stuck his bill deep into the bank on the other side. Mother and son White Weasel ran lightly and quickly across the log, over Blue Heron, and were safe and dry on the other side. They thanked Blue Heron and said they would tell all the persons in the woods how fine Blue Heron was. Then they went on their way.

Old Wolf had been standing on the riverbank watching how the weasels had gotten across.

'What a fine way it would be for me to cross the river. I am old and my bones ache.'

When Blue Heron came back to the marsh, Wolf said to him, 'Now I know why you Blue Herons are in the marsh - so you can be a bridge for persons to cross the river. I want to go across, but I am old and my bones hurt. Lie down in the water for me so I can cross.'

Blue Heron was angry. He didn't like being called a bridge. Old Wolf saw he had spoken foolish words and decided to use honeyed words.

'You are big and strong, Blue Heron, and that is why your body is such a fine bridge. You could carry me across like a feather.'

Blue Heron smiled at Wolf and said, 'Old Wolf, get on my back and I'll carry you across.'

Wolf grinned from ear to ear thinking how easily he had tricked Blue Heron.

He jumped on the bird's back and Heron went into the rushing river. When he got to the middle, he stopped.

'Friend Wolf,' said Blue Heron, 'you made a mistake. I am not strong enough to carry you across. For that you need two herons. I can carry you only halfway. Now you must get another heron to carry you the rest of the way.'

He gave his body a strong twist and Wolf fell into the water.

'You wait here, Wolf, for another heron to come and carry you to the other side.' Then he flew into the marsh.

The water ran swiftly. No heron came, so where did Wolf go? To the bottom of the river...

Since that day, no wolf has ever trusted a heron.